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VICTORIAN NOVELISTS

by a Victorian writer

BY

LEWIS MELVILLE

AUTHOR OF 'THE LIFE OF WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY'
'THE THACKERAY COUNTRY,' 'IN THE WORLD OF MIMES'
ETC. ETC.

WITH PORTRAITS

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WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY.
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Ex-judge for forty years!!

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Of the Essays included in the present volume, that on Disraeli first appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*; that on Charles Reade in *Chambers's Journal*; that on Anthony Trollope in *The Author*; and those on Lytton, Jerrold, Wilkie Collins, and Thackeray in *Temple Bar*. I desire to record my thanks to the editors of these periodicals for their courteous permission to reprint these papers. In every case they have been carefully revised, and in some instances partly rewritten. The remainder of the series are now published for the first time.

L. M.

Barnes, *February* 1906.

LORD LYTTON.
From an engraving.

BULWER LYTTON

SINCE the late fifties, when William Roscoe in the *Edinburgh Review*, and Nassau Senior in the *North British Review*, wrote of the novels of Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer, first Baron Lytton of Knebworth, few critics have thought it worth while to devote an article to the consideration of the works of this author. This is the more strange because, when *Falkland* and *Pelham* were published in 1827, there was room and to spare for a new novelist. Indeed, in England, when Lytton first rose into notice, this branch of letters was at a very low ebb. Scott was at the zenith of his fame, but he was a solitary figure in the realm of the aristocracy of fiction. Jane Austen was dead. Maria Edgeworth had written nothing of importance since *Ormond* in 1817; it was not until nine years later that she published *Helen*. There was, of course, more than one fashionable novelist, but their names, with their works, have gone into the limbo of things forgotten. Only Susan Ferrier demands mention, and the author of a book which appeared a few months before *Falkland*—*Vivian Grey*.

It is not uninteresting to note the resemblance

between the careers of Lytton and Disraeli. Born within a year of each other, both began life as novelists, and, after writing political squibs and pamphlets, entered the parliamentary arena, and therein won laurels. In Lord Derby's first administration Disraeli was Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons, and Lytton was Secretary for the Colonies. But, though engrossed in politics, neither abandoned the pursuit of letters, and, indeed, each did his best work after he had been elected a member of Parliament. Their first books bear a strange likeness to each other: both heroes throw themselves heart and soul into back-stair political intrigues. Lytton might conceivably have written the greater part—not all—of *Vivian Grey*; certainly Disraeli might have been the author of *Pelham*. Each was at heart a poet, and, without attaining any remarkable success, wrote some vigorous verse. Disraeli discovered his limitations after the publication of *The Revolutionary Epick*; and afterwards, with the exception of the tragedy *Alcaros* and some occasional lines, never made a serious bid for the poet's bays; it was many years before Lytton retired from the field. Finally, each has been neglected by succeeding generations of critics; no one has included either among 'English Men of Letters' or 'Great Writers'; indeed, no writers of the nineteenth century with equal pretensions have been so ignored by the essayists; if,

until recently, only Roscoe and Senior have discoursed upon the works of Lytton, only Sir Leslie Stephen and Mr. G. W. E. Russell have paid tribute to Disraeli.

Lytton certainly could not complain that his contemporaries ignored his work. In his earlier years criticism was undisguisedly savage. Especially notorious in this respect was *Fraser's Magazine*, and, through this medium, one of the worst offenders was Thackeray, who poked fun most unmercifully at 'Sawedwadgeorgeearllitnbulwig.' It was many years later that he wrote the amusing parody, *George de Barnwell*. Lytton was undoubtedly the most abused writer of his day. Yet not sneers, nor laughter, nor satire, nor parody, turned him from his path. This remarkably versatile man, poet, playwright, social critic, journalist, essayist, editor, orator, statesman, pamphleteer, wrote novel after novel to the number of twenty-seven, and, though all were not equally successful, to his credit it must be ascribed that he never published a carelessly written volume. He gave always of his best. Certainly no man ever more persistently wooed fame. He held an exalted opinion—indeed, an opinion not warranted by fact—of the influence wielded by the writer of novels. As a natural result he took his calling very seriously:

'It is not given to all to have genius—it is given to all to have honesty of purpose; an ordinary writer may have this in common with the greatest—that he may compose his work

with sincere and distinct views of promoting truth and administering to knowledge. I claim this intention fearlessly for myself,' he wrote in one of his essays. 'And if, contrary to my most solemn wishes, and my most thoughtful designs, any one of my writings can be shown, by dispassionate argument, to convey lessons tending to pervert the understanding and confound the eternal distinction between right and wrong; I will do my best to correct the error by stamping on it my own condemnation, and omitting it from the list of those it does not shame me to acknowledge.'

So far as Lytton's novels are concerned, professional criticism has always been at variance with public opinion. The critic has abused; the general reader has bought. And this has been the case, not only with the books published under his own name, when it might be regarded as the natural result of earlier successes, but also with the stories published anonymously. It was a habit of his often to publish anonymously, desiring to make a new success rather than to trade on the fruits of his reputation. Having joined issue, the critics and the great reading public have now agreed to differ. Though it is more than thirty years since his death, and more than seventy years since his first novel appeared, the public has never forsworn its allegiance, and his books, read by hundreds of thousands, rival those of Dickens in popularity.

Indeed, he resembled Dickens in other respects. Like him he often sought for strong effects in pathos, and worked in strong light or deep shadow. He

was far more literate than his greater brother of the pen, but he was excelled as a delineator of character. He could not tell a story so well as Wilkie Collins; he did not possess the vivid imagination or the graphic descriptive powers of Charles Reade; or the satire of Disraeli; or the brightness of Lever; neither is his humour to be likened to that of Thackeray, or his style to be compared with that of the master-stylist of the century. Because he was not pre-eminent among the giants, it has become the custom for 'superior' people to speak slightingly of his work. Much that was not worthy to be preserved he wrote—as, indeed, did also the giants; but a writer is as great as his greatest book, and it is not permissible to despise the author of *The Caxtons* and *My Novel, The Coming Race* and *A Strange Story, The Last Days of Pompeii, The Last of the Barons,* and *Harold.*

Of his four earliest novels, *Falkland, Pelham, The Disowned,* and *Devereux,* only the second calls for notice. *Falkland* was nearly still-born, but its successor created a positive *furore. Pelham* is not well constructed, but its character-drawing is admirable. The cynical Mr. Pelham, the worldly, vain Mrs. Pelham, whose letters are such delightful reading for those who can appreciate the author's irony; the learned, pedantic Vincent, who is never at a loss for an apt quotation; the coquettish, revengeful Duchess de Perpignan; the delightful,

jealous Madame D'Anville; the ridiculous M. Margot; the great leader of fashion, Lady Roseville; the *gourmet*, Guloseton; above all, the hero, dandy, conqueror of women, envied of men, brilliant, clever, equally at home in the drawing-room of an aristocrat or in a thieves' parlour with Job Jonson, most humorous of pickpockets. Such a gallery of portraits any young author might be proud of. The book has its defects, but in spite of these it keeps a place among its betters by virtue of the brilliancy which inspired it, the smartness and impertinence of its dialogue, its audacious social satire, and the general freshness and freedom from conventional methods.

Paul Clifford and *Eugene Aram* are Lytton's principal contributions to the 'Newgate novels,' which were so prevalent in the earlier years of the late century. Both were immensely popular. The anonymous author of *Elizabeth Brownrigge* (*Fraser's Magazine*, 1832) stated ironically that he was prepared to treat with any enterprising publisher for a series of novels under the title of *Tales of the Old Bailey, or, Romances of Tyburn Tree*, in which the whole of the 'Newgate Calendar' should be travestied after the manner of *Eugene Aram*; and Thackeray wrote *Catherine* avowedly to counteract the injurious influence of the popular fiction of the day, which made heroes of highwaymen and burglars, and 'created a false sympathy for the vicious and criminal.'

The satire of *Catherine*, however, was so subtle that the public regarded it as realistic fiction, and more than one unenlightened critic pronounced it 'dull, vulgar, and immoral.' These books are immoral because they are readable; that is to say, because they are untrue. Neither Lytton nor Ainsworth would have dared to paint their heroes as they knew them to be. That would have been to anticipate Zola at his worst, and the reading public was then far more squeamish than it is now.

In *Paul Clifford* and *Eugene Aram* the construction is skilful, and, accepting the author's premises, his conclusions may be admitted. But the psychology is at fault throughout. A work of imagination may be fantastic, but if it deals with life it must necessarily be true or untrue to life, and if it is untrue it cannot be accepted as a work of art. It may be taken for granted that the robber is not a Paul Clifford, nor the murderer a Eugene Aram. To take a thief and, endowing him with heroic and romantic qualities, make him the central figure, may be a good receipt for the composition of a successful book; but such a book must without hesitation be pronounced pernicious. As introduced in *Pelham*, the Job Jonson episode is amusing enough; but imagine a story in which most of the characters are humourless Job Jonsons, and so realise *Paul Clifford*!

The author asserts a purpose: 'to draw attention to two evils in our penal institutions, viz. a vicious

prison discipline and a sanguinary criminal code—the habit of corrupting the boy by the very punishment that ought to redeem him, and then hanging the man, on the first occasion, as the easiest way of getting rid of our blunders.' But it is all unreal: the police-court, and the justice presiding over it; the fashionable folk of Bath; even the very basis of the book, the criminals, Tomlinson, Gentleman George, Pepper, and 'Old Bags,' are mere puppets of the author and possess no inherent vitality; while Paul Clifford, brought up surrounded by thieves, sent unjustly to Bridewell, does not hold the imagination, in spite of his education, manners, and appearance. The love interest is tedious, and the whole dull and unrelieved by humour. Though by no means to be confounded with the 'Newgate novels,' *Night and Morning* and *Lucretia* deal with crimes and criminals. Little need be said about these stories. The former has the purpose of exposing the hardships of illegitimacy; the latter, the preface states, is a true record of the deeds of two well-known misguided folk. This is by far the better piece of work. The characters are more clearly drawn than in any former work by the author, especially those of Sir Miles St. Johns; the terrible Olivier Dalibard; the scheming Gabriel Varney, who wants to get rich in a hurry by any means rather than by honest work; and Lucretia, for whom it is impossible not to feel pity. But there is the tendency of the author to adorn his style with

meretricious ornament, to harp upon the glory of the Ideal and the Beautiful, and to interrupt the narrative to apostrophise all sorts of things.

'Moon and starbeam, ye love the midnight solitude of the scholar!' 'Shine back, ye stars! Send not your holy, pure, and trouble-lulling light to the countenance blanched and livid with thoughts of murder!' 'Range, O Art, through all space, clasp together extremes, shake idle wealth from its lethargy, and bid states look in novels, where the teacher is dumb, and Reason unweeded runs to riot! Bid haughty intellect pause in its triumph, and doubt if intellect alone can deliver the soul from its tempters!'

All these faults are to be found in two earlier volumes that have always been very popular—*Ernest Maltravers* and the sequel *Alice*—as well as a false sentimentality that is unpardonable.

The remaining novels of importance may be treated under the heading of historical romances, tales of mystery, and stories of domestic life.

The historical romances, as much as any of Lytton's works, have contributed to build up his popularity. They are carefully constructed, and, if they do not bear comparison with the masterpieces of Scott, with *Esmond*, or even with *Romola*, at least it cannot be denied that they are far above the level of the 'cloak and rapier' writers, who strive, and strive in vain, to emulate that greatest of romancers, Dumas *père*. Though there is a certain amount of the 'An' it please my lord,' and 'By'r Lady' phrasing, which is the stock-in-trade of most workers in this field, Lytton

has not overweighted the dialogue with incongruous oaths and ungrammatical archaisms. His reading was immense, and, these novels having been the result of much study, their historical basis is usually sound. *The Last Days of Pompeii* is a tale of the first century, when the Christian religion was making its way to the gradual undermining of the worship of the mythological gods. Isis is represented as one of the principal deities of this age and Arbaces is the high priest, assisted by Calenus, who works the mysteries of the temple. On a large canvas is depicted the life in the city, with its inhabitants, gladiators, patricians, rich plebeians, pagans and Christians, Romans, Athenians, and Egyptians. There is the handsome Glaucus, prince of noblemen, beloved by all the women, by Julia, daughter of a wealthy merchant, by his beautiful compatriot Ione, and by the blind girl Nydia. Most of the characters are described rather than shown, and Arbaces is a purely melodramatic villain. But Nydia is skilfully portrayed. Indeed, Nydia is the success of the book, and, when everything else is forgotten, she remains in the mind, tender and loving, a haunting memory.

Rienzi shows a marked advance. It treats of the rise, the splendour, and the fall of the noble scholarly Cola di Rienzi, who, roused from his ambitious dreams by the murder of his brother by a patrician, seeks revenge in the raising of 'the people' to a power in the state, so as to undermine the position of the

Roman aristocracy. A great theme, it is not unworthily treated. The book is a stirring history of intrigues and fights, treachery and fidelity, love and hate. The characters are more interesting: Rienzi himself; his sister, the fair and tender Irene; his noble and stately wife, Nina; the free-lance, Walter de Montreal, who dies as fearlessly as he lived; the Colonnas, especially old Stephen, and the noble-minded Adrian; the Orsini and other nobles; the giant blacksmith, Cecco del Vecchio, and the page, Angelo Villani, most faithful of the tribune's followers until he discovers he has the blood of kindred to avenge. This tale of the fourteenth century is a great achievement, and for ever must occupy a niche among historical romances written by Englishmen. Scarcely less successful were *Harold* and *The Last of the Barons*, in each of which a bird's-eye view is given of town and country, and the period is most carefully presented. Imaginary characters mingle with those of history: the palm must be given to Adam Warner, the follower of Roger Bacon, the philosopher in advance of his age.

Perhaps strictly speaking *The Parisians* should not be placed among the historical romances, as it was an account by a contemporary. But as the subject is now a matter of history, the objection may be overruled. In this story, written towards the end of his life, Lytton eclipsed his earlier successes. The tale is more vigorous, the affectation has departed, and the

apostrophe is rarely to be found. In this description of Paris during the Franco-Prussian war and the year preceding it, there is shown the power of character-drawing that appears in the 'Caxtons' series. The hero is Alain de Kerouec, Marquis de Rochebriant, a young man, bred in the great traditions of his house, who cannot fraternise with the flippant *jeunesse dorée* of the metropolis. He is the proudest man of his day. Impoverished by his father's extravagance, he no more dreams of selling his *château* than he thinks of selling himself in marriage. Yet he does marry the daughter of a great financier; and much of the interest of the book is due to the fight between two great Stock Exchange magnates, Duplessis and Louvier. The great world is represented and the social world. Prominent in these are Lemercier; Paul and Enguerrand de Vandemar, who keep a glove-shop to provide themselves with pocket-money; Isaura, the authoress; Graham Vane; Gustave Rameau, the hysterical poet of the Revolution; the pitiable yet brave Julie Caumartin; and that strong man, the mysterious Victor de Mauléon. Particularly interesting are the chapters dealing with the siege of Paris; and there is an unfinished chapter with a description of a dinner off Lemercier's pet dog Fox, delightfully written, which reminds the reader of Sterne, an author who always greatly influenced Lytton.

Zanoni also has some claims to be regarded as an historical romance, since part of the action takes place

in Paris during the period of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and Robespierre, Couthon, Barrère, Tallien, Camille Desmoulins, cross the pages as more or less subordinate characters. This portion of *Zanoni* bears a strange likeness to *A Tale of Two Cities*, published two years later. The resemblance is enhanced when Zanoni gives himself up to save his wife in almost the same circumstances as Sidney Carton sacrificed himself to save the husband of the woman he loved. Pre-eminently, however, this is a tale of mystery, an imaginary record of the searchers after truth, members of the society of which the ancient Rosicrucians were but a youthful branch. This society had discovered the secret of eternal life, and those who reached to the highest circle lived for ever at the age at which they were initiated. The two survivors who had lived from time immemorial, were Mejnour, an old man, and Zanoni, a young man; figures typical respectively of pure reason and of that wisdom which includes a lively concern for one's fellow-creatures. Though well conceived and nobly planned, the story is not a success. The unknown and the supernatural, aided by the introduction of various spirits of light and darkness, are essentially theatrical as represented here. In this book, perhaps, more than in any of those preceding, Lytton unveils his views of life. That he did not think very deeply, that he did not see very clearly, cannot well be disputed; but beyond all doubt he shows a love of his kind and an apprecia-

tion of simplicity that were not always features of his work.

In *A Strange Story* he advanced a further step. The mystery is well kept up; the style is more restrained, the characters are more natural. This tale, however, was eclipsed by a brilliant effort of the imagination that has always been read with interest and will not be easily forgotten—*The Coming Race.* This and the short *Haunted and the Haunters,* a tale of mystery worthy to rank with Poe, and probably the best ghost story ever written by an English author, constitute some portion of Lytton's claim to remembrance.

The Caxtons was a new departure; an attempt to draw a simple picture of an upper middle-class family. The story is slight and need not here be told. But any reader with a sense of humour must delight in this book from the opening lines:

'"Sir—sir, it is a boy!"

'"A boy," said my father, looking up from his book and evidently much puzzled. "What is a boy?"'

until the very end.

It is often said that Lytton's characters are not the men and women of life, but merely the conventional men and women of fiction. Yet in this 'domestic novel' there is a pleasant gallery, if not of masterpieces, at least of studies far above the ordinary. Who does not love Austin Caxton, the dreaming pedant, with his philosophising moods, his immense

erudition, his unexpected worldly wisdom shown in his management of the affairs of others, his simple generous heart, his playful subtle humour, his love for his young child, and his 'great book' on that vast subject, *The History of Human Error*? It is for his sake one is glad when Pisistratus, 'the anachronism,' returns from Australia with funds to launch that mighty work. What a pathetic figure is he when telling his wife the story of his life before they met, his love for Lady Ellinor—when telling the story of his romance in a grave, solemn, kindly manner, without even a single quotation! And the grey, eagle-eyed old soldier, Captain Roland, with his respect and admiration for truth and courage and honour, and his love for his ruined ancestral tower and barren acres. Who has not been touched by the brothers' quarrel as to whether the blank space in the pedigree should be filled in with the name of Sir William de Caxton, who fought and fell at Bosworth, or the famous printer of black-letter pamphlets in the sanctuary at Westminster? And light-hearted, irresponsible, enthusiastic Uncle Jack, that plausible, unfortunate company-promoter, whose ideas are good but in advance of those of otherwise possible subscribers. And that prince of fine gentlemen, Sir Sedley Beaudesert, who, above all things, dreads to be old. How delightful is the wooing and winning of his wife after the marriage of convenience, and the grand manner in which he routs the dangerous

Prince von Leubenfels, who pays her such marked attention. Pisistratus is somewhat of a prig—as, indeed, what young hero is not?—but withal a manly, good-hearted, sensible fellow. His cousin Herbert, the bad young man of the story, inspires nothing but pity. Of gipsy blood on the female side, and as a little boy turned by maternal complainings against his father, he goes through life a pariah: his hand against every man, because, as he wrongly believes, every man's hand is against him. He cannot understand his father; and Roland, man of rigid honour, though loving, cannot understand him. But there is good in the ill-conditioned lad. He eventually works out his repentance and then enters the army, not seeking death, yet knowing that only death can fully expiate his sins. In India, for gallant conduct, he is promoted on the field; and he dies, humble and penitent, in one of the great battles that won for England the great Indian Empire.

Belonging to the same group of 'domestic novels' are *My Novel, What will he do with it?* and *Kenelm Chillingly*. The story in each of these is slight, but the character drawing is admirable. *My Novel* is the best, with its portraits of the Hazeldeans, the Squire, 'Harry,' and Frank; Parson Dale and his wife; Lenny Fairfield and his wife; Richard Avenel and his 'old folk' with their family skeleton; the itinerant tinker, Stirn; Audley Egerton; Dr. Morgan, allopathist; Randal Leslie and the ruined family; the

scholar Burley; Mr. Digby and Helen; the high-bred dare-devil Count Peschira; Jackeymo; Violante; Riccabocca of the diabolical quotations, the student of Machiavelli, the tender-hearted Duke di Serrano. As in *Paul Clifford* and in *The Caxtons* there is an attempted abduction of an heiress, and the good young man who succeeds and the bad young man who fails. The Caxton family act as chorus both in this and in *What will he do with it?* where there is the delightful pathetic 'Gentleman' Waife. *Kenelm Chillingly* contains many of the types of its two predecessors, but the muscular clergyman and the editor of *The Londoner* are fresh. The best thing in the book, which contains some agreeable verse, is the fight between Kenelm and Tom Bowles. The hero is a prig, but he is rather an amusing prig, and he improves marvellously during his wanderings. The love-scenes, so tender, are exquisitely presented, and perhaps Cecilia is the sweetest character in any of the books.

What Lytton might have achieved if he had been less versatile and more content to remain faithful to the novel, if he had never been troubled by 'the eternal want of pence,' it is difficult to say. But he did good work, and when the extravagance of his youth had gone, when he had abandoned the pseudo-sentiment of the earlier days, he could and did write very charmingly, as may be deduced from the passage (when Pisistratus returns to his home after discovering his love for the wealthy girl whom he cannot

hope to marry), with which this paper may fittingly be brought to a close :—

'I took a chair between the two, and looked first at one, then at the other—heaven forgive me! I felt a rebellious, ungrateful spite against both. The bitterness of my soul must have been deep indeed, to have overflowed in that direction, but it did. The grief of youth is an abominable egotist, and that is the truth. I got up from the chair, and walked towards the window; it was open, and outside the window was Mrs. Primmins' canary, in its cage. London air had agreed with it, and it was singing lustily. Now when the canary saw me standing opposite to its cage, and regarding it seriously, and, I have no doubt, with a very sombre aspect, the creature stopped short, and hung its head on one side, looking at me obliquely and suspiciously. Finding that I did it no harm, it began to hazard a few broken notes, timidly and interrogatively, as it were, pausing between each; and at length, as I made no reply, it evidently thought it had solved the doubt, and ascertained that I was more to be pitied than feared—for it stole into so soft and silvery a strain that, I verily believe, it did it on purpose to comfort me!—me, its old friend, whom it had unjustly suspected. Never did any music touch me so home as did that long, plaintive cadence. And when the bird ceased, it perched itself close to the bars of the cage, and looked at me steadily with its bright, intelligent eyes. I felt mine water, and I turned back and stood in the centre of the room, irresolute what to do, where to go. My father had done with the proof, and was deep in his folios. Roland had clasped his red account-book, restored it to his pocket, wiped his pen carefully, and now watched me from under his great beetle brows. Suddenly he rose, and stamping on the hearth with his cork leg, exclaimed: 'Look up from those cursed books, brother Austin! What is there in your son's face? Construe *that*, if you can!"'

Photo. Emery Walker.

LORD BEACONSFIELD.

From the copy of the painting by J. E. Millais, in the National Portrait Gallery.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI

DISRAELI has not yet been awarded the fruits of his work as a man of letters. Here and there, notably by Sir Leslie Stephen, tribute has been paid, but no place has been assigned to him by Mr. John Morley among 'English Men of Letters,' nor by Professor Eric Robertson among 'Great Writers.' The general mass of readers who, so far as concerns works of real literary merit, are undoubtedly swayed by authority, noticing the general neglect, incline to relegate to a secondary place the books in question. In this case, however, it is not necessary to combat opposition or adverse criticism, so much as to present the claims of the novels to be ranked as literature worthy to be enrolled among the classics of the language.

The neglect of Disraeli's writings may be in part due to the fact that most people think it is below the dignity of a statesman, or of any man following what is called a 'serious' profession, to compose works of fiction. Certainly, many do not yet understand that the man who writes novels may be a very wise man; they do not realise that accurately to portray human nature, and to present pictures of life, is not only a most worthy, but also a most difficult task, requiring

for its performance an intelligence far above the average, acute powers of observation, and a keen sense of humour. Indeed, there are still some—happily fewer and fewer every year—who sneer at novels and regard them as works of supererogation, all unknowing of the opportunity they throw away to learn something of the nature and habits of their fellow-creatures. For, surely, the great novelist is *the* observer, sounding the depths while others glance at the surface, and examining the mysteries of life, while others are content to overlook even the obvious. Those who dabble in ink often wade deep in human nature; and, apart from all else, every good novel indirectly teaches humanity, humility, and a deeper understanding of the heart.

Be the cause what it may, by the vast majority Disraeli is regarded as a statesman who wrote novels. The alternative view, that he was a man of letters who became a statesman, is accepted only by those who place literature before statecraft, and who realise that while the triumphs of the politician and the diplomatist are fleeting, a great book is, so far as anything on this earth can be, eternal.

Disraeli's first book, *Vivian Grey*, met with instantaneous success. Like Byron, its author went to sleep an unknown lad and awoke to find himself famous. This *roman-à-clef*, in which were introduced all the principal statesmen and well-known society folk of the day, set all the world talking and laughing

—except the few who frowned and were silent. The motto was impudent:—

> 'Why, then the world 's mine oyster,
> Which I with sword will open,'

and the dedication characteristic:—

> 'To the best and greatest of men I dedicate these volumes. He for whom it is intended will accept and appreciate the compliment; those for whom it is not intended will—do the same.'

The novel has all the faults of youth. It contains apostrophes to Experience, to Music, and to many other abstract objects (the names of which can be written with a capital initial letter), in a style that Lytton was popularising; and caricatures of many contemporaries—such caricatures as are never very difficult to draw, requiring, as the author admitted subsequently, only a small portion of talent and a great want of courtesy.

Vivian Grey, just out of his teens, the son of a well-known man of letters, meets at his father's table a distinguished, albeit stupid, statesman, the Marquess of Carabas, whom he inveigles into a political cabal against the government of the day, of which the Marquess is a member. The intrigues and counter-intrigues, above all, the marvellous resource of the hero, constitute the best part of the book. In the end the Carabas party is defeated by a woman's treachery, the various members retire, the nominal leader is informed that 'His Majesty has no longer

any occasion for his services,' and Vivian, forced into a duel in which by accident he kills his opponent, is compelled to go abroad. The course of his travels, the places he visits, the people he meets, and his impressions are all vividly depicted: especially his intercourse with Lady Madeleine Trevor, Baron de Königstein, and Violet Fane, with whom he falls in love.

'Once more at the river-side—once more bending over her with starting eyes—once more the attentive ear listening for the soundless breath. No sound! not even a sigh! Oh! what would he have given for her shriek of anguish!—No change had occurred in her position, but the lower part of her face had fallen; and there was a general appearance which struck him with awe. Her body was quite cold:—her limbs stiffened. He gazed, and gazed, and gazed. He bent over her with stupor, rather than grief, stamped on his features. It was very slowly that the dark thought came over his mind —very slowly that the horrible thought seized upon his soul. He gave a loud shriek, and fell on the lifeless body of VIOLET FANE!'

So, written in the author's most transpontine vein, ends the first part.

Though there is no sustained plot, the story possesses a central idea: to trace the development of the character of a youth of great talents, whose mind has been corrupted by the artificial age in which he lives. Alike when dealing with the intrigues of the Carabas party, or of the mediatised Prince of Little Lilliput, or of Beckendorff, the book is interesting; but the love-story is weak. Vivian is an entertaining fellow,

with his impudence, and his improvised quotations, and his philosophy, which is a curious mixture of extravagance and sound common sense. The self-satisfied, conceited Lord Carabas is a well-drawn character, and so is the disappointed politician, Cleveland; and the card-sharper, Königstein (for whom, in spite of all, there is a tinge of pity in the reader's mind); and Esper George; and the subtle statesman Beckendorff; but when the book is laid aside, the only female portrait that lingers in the memory is that of the intriguing Mrs. Felix Lorraine. In spite of its defects, *Vivian Grey* will endure through many generations by virtue of its brilliant humour, satirical wit, and sparkling dialogue, as well as by its very remarkable unconventionality.

The next production was *Popanilla*, a satire on the English Constitution. This is a sort of inverted *Gulliver's Travels*. Instead of an Englishman finding an undiscovered island, an inhabitant of the unknown Isle of Fantasie finds on the shore a sea-chest filled with books. These he studies, and as his newly acquired knowledge seems likely to revolutionise the island, he is put into a canoe, and drifts until he arrives at Hubbabub, 'the largest city, not only that exists, but that ever did exist, and the capital of the island Vraibleusia, the most famous island not only that is known, but that ever was known.' Having declared himself to be the most injured of beings, banished, ruined, and unhappy, the victim

of a despotic sovereign, a corrupt aristocracy, and a misguided people, he is accorded that most enthusiastic welcome, which in the early years of the last century seems to have been the special prerogative of political refugees. He is at once inducted into the mysteries of the systems of Competition, of Credit, and of Banking. Not unnaturally he is greatly bewildered, and his perplexity is not minimised by the information volunteered by a Vraibleusian: 'The annual interest upon our debt exceeds the whole wealth of the rest of the world; therefore we must be the richest nation in the world.' Popanilla naturally concluded that the nation who contrived to be the richest people in the world while they were head over ears in debt must be fast approaching a state of perfection. The satire is always good-humoured, but nothing is safe from attack. The best chapter is that devoted to the Anglican Church. The skits on the Constitution, on government by party (with the motto, 'something will turn up'), on political economy, on the commercial system, on self-made millionaires (for the completion of whose education the author asserts that 'fashionable' novels are written), and on the colonial system (which fortifies a rock in the middle of the sea, and crams it with clerks, lawyers, and priests), make amusing reading, as well as providing food for reflection, even in these enlightened days.

Ixion in Heaven is a social satire, based upon the

story of the King of Thessaly, who was carried to Olympus, where he fell in love with the Queen of the Gods. In this, George IV. is represented as Jupiter, Byron as Apollo, and many figures prominent at Court and in society are introduced. *The Infernal Marriage* is a political squib, taken from the story of Proserpine, who is carried to Elysium, and there becomes a great lady. The Giants and the Gods are the Tories and the Whigs; Enceladus is the Iron Duke, and Hyperion is Sir Robert Peel. The author is at his best both in style and in manner in these three short sketches; his humour is more unfettered and his fancy is permitted to run riot. Little read as they are, they form a worthy addition to the all too short list of really clever satires in the English language.

Disraeli's second novel was *The Young Duke.* It was written before the accession of William IV., and is a picture of 'high life,' which in later days the same hand was to paint again in more vivid colours and in a much more striking manner. The dialogue is not so bright as that of *Vivian Grey,* but the story is more concise. A sincere attempt is made to depict a man with all his faults and redeeming virtues; but the result is not conspicuously successful, and much of the book might as well have been written by the 'fashionable novelist.' But there is a description of a gambling episode, when the Duke and his friends play cards for two whole days and

nights, that is worthy to rank with almost anything in the later novels.

'Immense as this loss was, he was more struck—more appalled, let us say—at the strangeness of the surrounding scene than even by his own ruin. As he looked upon his fellow-gamesters, he seemed, for the first time in his life, to gaze upon some of those hideous demons of whom he had read. He looked in the mirror at himself. A blight seemed to have fallen over his beauty, and his presence seemed accursed. He had pursued a dissipated, even more than a dissipated career. Many were the nights that had been spent by him not on his couch, great had been the exhaustion that he had often experienced; haggard had sometimes even been the lustre of his youth. But when had been marked upon his brow this harrowing care? When had his features before been stamped with this anxiety, this anguish, this baffled desire, this strange, unearthly scowl, which made him even tremble? What, was it possible—it could not be—that in time he was to be like those awful, those unearthly, those unhallowed things that were around him? He felt as if he had fallen from his state, as if he had dishonoured his ancestry, as if he had betrayed his trust. He felt a criminal. In the darkness of his meditations a flash burst from his lurid mind, a celestial light appeared to dissipate this thickening gloom, and his soul felt as if it were bathed with the softening radiancy. He thought of May Dacre, he thought of everything that was pure, and holy, and beautiful, and luminous and calm. It was the innate virtue of the man that made this appeal to his corrupted nature. His losses seemed nothing; his dukedom would be too slight a ransom for freedom from these ghouls and for the breath of the sweet air.'

Disraeli was slowly but surely learning his art, and his next novel, *Contarini Fleming*, is on a higher

plane than either of its predecessors. It called forth the praises of no less a literary personage than Goethe; while Milman, who, reading for John Murray, recommended it for publication, declared that it was in no way inferior to *Childe Harold.* The original title of the story was *The Psychological Romance,* and, though it was reluctantly changed by the author in deference to the publisher's opinion, this very clearly denotes the nature of the work, the chief study of which is the development and formation of the Poetic Character. The plot is slight to a degree; but the character-drawing is excellent, and the love-scenes are unusually tender and poetic. There is less humour than in the earlier books, but that is probably only because there is very little scope for it. Yet the proposal of marriage made by little Contarini to Christiana at the very moment that he declares his intention 'to roam, a pirate on the far waves of the Ægean,' is exquisite; and there is nothing more delicious than the scene when the boy, hating the petty domestic restrictions, points out 'in mad heroics' to his mother 'the exact situation.'

'The Baroness was terrified out of her life. The fall of the chair was the perfection of fear. She was one of those women who have the highest respect for furniture. She could not conceive a human being, much less a boy, voluntarily kicking down a chair, if his feelings were not very keen indeed. It was becoming too serious. She tried to soothe me, she would not speak to my father. All should

be right, all should be forgotten, if only I would not commit suicide, and not kick down the chairs.'

How far this study of the growth and development of a human soul was founded upon the author's experience, it is dangerous to speculate. There is undoubtedly a tendency to regard it as, in great part, a faithful transcript from life.

'When I examine the state of European society with the unimpassioned spirit which the philosopher can alone command, I perceive that it is in a state of transition—a state of transition from Feudal to Federal principles,' so runs one of the concluding paragraphs of *Contarini Fleming*. This is the basis of *The Revolutionary Epick*. The argument of this ambitious work is simple. Magros, the genius of Feudalism, creates the Teutonic race which establishes in the world the system of its founder; then comes Change, which, in its turn, is superseded by Lyriden, the genius of Federation, who endeavours to set up the standard of liberty, equality, and fraternity. This occupies the first two cantos. Three cantos alone were written, and the last deals with the conquest of Italy by Napoleon. Only the curious ever take up this volume nowadays, though there are some really fine passages, well worthy of study. No one should fail to read the Preface. No man living in the nineteenth century, save the author, could have written it. This piece of bombast, though it could only have been composed by a

brilliant man, would have been an impertinence in Homer! It should have been included in a new edition of the elder D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature.*

'It was on the plains of Troy that I first conceived the idea of this work. Wandering over that illustrious scene, surrounded by the tombs of heroes, and by the confluence of poetic streams, my musing thoughts clustered round the memory of that immortal song, to which all creeds and countries alike respond, which has vanquished chance and defied time. Deeming myself, perchance too rashly in that excited hour, a poet, I cursed the destiny that had placed me in an age that boasted of being anti-poetical. And while my fancy thus struggled with my reason, it flashed across my mind, like the lightning which was then playing over Ida, that in those great poems which rise, the pyramids of poetic art, amid the falling and fading splendour of less creations, the poet hath ever embodied the spirit of his time. Thus the most heroic incident of an heroic age produced in the *Iliad* an heroic epick; thus, the consolidation of the most superb of empires produced in the *Æneid* a political epick; the revival of learning and the birth of vernacular genius, presented us in the *Divine Comedy* with a national epick; and the Reformation and its consequences called from the rapt lyre of Milton a religious epick. And the spirit of my time, shall it be uncelebrated? Standing Principles of Government, that at present contend for the mastery of the world. "What!" I exclaimed, "is the Revolution of France a less important event than the siege of Troy? Is Napoleon a less interesting character than Achilles? For me remains the Revolutionary Epick!'

Disraeli broke fresh ground with *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy*, the story of an attempt during the

twelfth century of a Prince of the Captivity to emancipate his race. The narrative is most dramatic. Indeed, the author stated that if the drama in England had not been a career encompassed with difficulties, he would have made David Alroy the hero of a tragedy. The spirit of the East was strong within Disraeli, and, so far as moderns can judge, the character of Oriental life is unusually well and truly portrayed. No less experienced a critic than Lady Burton expressed astonishment that Disraeli, who had only passed two or three weeks in his youth in the desert, should have been able to take up all that the desert could suggest to those who had spent a lifetime in its desolate wastes. The style of the book, which may best be described as 'poetic fiction,' enhances the reality of the tale. No one who did not possess the spirit of a poet could have written successfully in such a manner. Indeed, the whole is a prose poem, which reaches its highest and best in the description of the finding by Alroy of the sceptre of Solomon, and its most humorous when the teachers most learned in the Talmud discuss the position of the Tombs of the Kings.

Belonging to quite a different class were the next two productions. *Henrietta Temple* is a love-story pure and simple. No book by Disraeli has caused such diverse opinions. One critic has gone so far as to say the love-scenes remind him of *Romeo and Juliet*; another can see no merit at all in them.

Probably these extremes of opinion are equally wrong. The note of exaggeration resounds throughout the book; and the love passages only tend to show, since it is improbable that human nature has changed since the thirties, how much more natural are the best writers of fiction of to-day. The principal merit of the book is the sketch of a noble family clinging tenaciously to their heavily mortgaged estates; and the best scene takes place in the sponging-house—a scene said to have been founded upon an unpleasant experience of the author, who for years past had been notoriously in debt. *Venetia* is an attempt 'to shadow forth, "though in a glass, darkly," two of the most renowned and refined spirits that have adorned these our later days,' Shelley and Byron. It is usually said that this is the least interesting of Disraeli's novels. Probably this harsh judgment is pronounced because people are too apt to read *romans-à-clef* simply with the object of tracing the resemblance between the characters and their prototypes. It may be because the portrayal of the heroes is not vastly successful that *Venetia* is looked at askance. But if it is regarded merely as a story, surely a more favourable opinion will ensue. It is far more interesting than *Henrietta Temple*. There is no hackneyed, ultra-sentimental love-story. The plot is clear, the psychology admirable, and the characters cleverly delineated. The contrast between the two mothers is well defined: Lady Annabel, firm, and outwardly

cold, separated from her husband, devoting the years to the rearing of her daughter; Mrs. Cadurcis, a widow, loving her son, but subject to most terrible fits of temper, invariably followed by a period of the most abject repentance. And the speculations of Venetia about her father, of whom no word is ever uttered in her hearing, and the feelings of the devoted mother, who is jealous of her child's regret of never having known her other parent, are well imagined and truly presented. It is not too much to hope that one day *Venetia* may rank higher than it does among the author's works.

With the publication of *Coningsby, or, The New Generation*, opened a new and the most important chapter of Disraeli's literary career. Eighteen years earlier, by virtue of its audacity, *Vivian Grey* had attracted attention; now, by force of merit, *Coningsby* compelled it. There have been other authors who might have written the earlier books, even *Contarini Fleming* and *Alroy*, though not *Popanilla*; no one, save himself, could have composed *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, *Tancred*, and *Lothair*. Through these he stands head and shoulders above the majority of his literary contemporaries.

With *Coningsby* Disraeli reverted to the political novel, which indeed he had invented, or, at least, introduced into England. *Vivian Grey*, however, was written by an inexperienced lad; *Coningsby* by a man who had lived and struggled in the political world,

and was slowly, yet surely, realising in life his audacious ambition: to distinguish himself above all his contemporaries. There is the merest thread of story. Indeed, the book is but a vehicle for the expression of the author's political and social views, an endeavour 'to picture something of that development of the new, and, as I believe, the better mind of England,' and 'to scatter some suggestions that may tend to elevate the tone of public life, ascertain the true character of political parties, and induce us for the future more carefully to distinguish between facts and phrases, realities and phantoms.' In a word, to present the views of the Young England party, whose object was to make more effective the power of the Crown after the Parliamentary reforms of 1832; to remove the Church, in so far as concerned purely spiritual matters, from Parliamentary dictation; to decentralise authority to local bodies, and to improve the condition of the labouring classes. *Coningsby* is valuable for the picture of the political world and social life of the day; for the account of secret ministerial history, tracing the overthrow of the 'Venetian Constitution' and the struggles of the reformers; and for the contrast exhibited between the ideas of the new generation and the old. If the hero voices the hopes of the then rising school of politicians, the Marquess of Monmouth is the mouthpiece of that which preceded it. Of all the character-sketches in this book there is not

one more admirably conceived than the Marquess, profligate, cynical, heartless, selfish, albeit shrewd and with plenty of common sense, knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing, yet withal always the *grand seigneur*. Upon the broad canvas are many figures. Eustace Lyle, the Catholic gentleman, who endeavours to revive the monastic customs of his ancestors, is one of the most pleasing. 'It seems to me a barren thing, this Conservatism,' he remarked happily on one occasion, 'an unhappy cross-bred, the mule of politics, that engenders nothing.' Another well-remembered character is Rigby (identified as the well-hated, much-abused John Wilson Croker), blustering, dictatorial, disputatious, the writer of slashing articles—'it was thought that no one could lash a woman like Rigby.' 'Rigby loved to patronise, to play the minister unbending, and seeking relief from the cares of council in the society of artists, authors, and men of science. He liked dukes to dine with him and hear him scatter his audacious criticisms to Sir Thomas or Sir Humphrey. They went away astonished by the powers of their host, who, had he not fortunately devoted these powers to their party, must apparently have rivalled Vandyke, or discovered the Safety Lamp.' Sidonia, the Jewish financier, who, being of foreign extraction, is able to regard English institutions with impartial eyes, though modelled upon a well-known banker, is made the mouthpiece of the author. He believes an

individual divine as compared with a vast public opinion. 'God made man in His own image; but the public is made by Newspapers, Members of Parliament, Excise Officers, and Poor Law Guardians.' 'Nurture your mind with great thoughts: to believe in the heroic makes heroes.' 'Adventures are to the adventurous.' To his admiration for youth and his pride of race reference will presently be made.

Taper and Tadpole have become household words—political hacks, doing the dirty work of the party, despised, yet courted by the powerful and the wealthy. £1200 per annum is their idea of political science and human nature. 'To receive £1200 per annum is government; to try to receive £1200 per annum is opposition; to wish to receive £1200 per annum is ambition.' Upon them Disraeli opened the vials of his scorn, and with ironic humour held them up to ridicule, not only in *Coningsby*, but also in *Sybil*.

'"We must not dissolve," said Mr. Taper. "We have no cry."

'"As much cry as the other fellows," said Mr. Tadpole; "but no one of course would think of dissolution before the next registration. No, no; this is a very manageable Parliament, depend upon it. The malcontent radicals who have turned them out are not going to bring them in. That makes us equal. Then we have an important section to work upon—the Sneaks, the men who are afraid of a dissolution. I will be bound we make a good working conservative majority of five-and-twenty out of the Sneaks."

'"With the Treasury patronage," said Mr. Taper; "fear

and favour combined. An impending dissolution, and all the places we refuse our own men, we may count on the Sneaks."

'"Then there are several religious men who have wanted an excuse for a long time to rat," said Mr. Tadpole. "We must get Sir Robert to make some kind of a religious move, and that will secure Sir Litany Lax and young Mr. Salem."

'"It will never do to throw over the Church Commission," said Mr. Taper. "Commissions and committees ought always to be supported."

'"Besides, it will frighten the saints," said Mr. Tadpole. "If we could get him to speak at Exeter Hall— were it only a slavery meeting—that would do."

'"It is difficult," said Taper; "he must be pledged to nothing—not even to the right of search. Yet if we could get up something with a good deal of sentiment and no principle involved; referring only to the past, but with his practised powers touching the present. What do you think of a monument to Wilberforce or a commemoration to Clarkson?"

'"There is a good deal in that," said Mr. Tadpole. "At present go about and keep our fellows in good humour. Whisper nothings that sound like something. But be discreet; do not let there be more than half a hundred fellows who believe they are going to be Under-Secretaries of State. And be cautious about titles. If they push you, give a wink and press your finger to your lip. I must call here," continued Mr. Tadpole, as he stopped before the house of the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine. "This gentleman is my particular charge. I have been cooking him these three years. I had two notes from him yesterday, and can delay a visit no longer. The worst of it is, he expects that I shall bear him the non-official announcement of his being sent to Ireland, of which he has as much chance as I have of being Governor-General of India. It must be confessed ours is critical work sometimes, friend Taper; but never mind—what we have to do to

individuals Peel has to do with a nation, and therefore we ought not to complain."'

Disraeli struck a deeper note in *Sybil, or, The Two Nations.* Here is an endeavour clearly to show the contrast between the rich and the poor. The Marneys and the Mowbrays, the young aristocrats, club-life, the Derby, great receptions, country houses, on one side; on the other, the semi-starvation and the utter degradation of the manufacturing and the mining districts. He devoted all his powers of graphic description to portray the wretched state of the peasantry, the cruelty to which the working-classes were exposed at the hands of their employers, the iniquities of the truck-shop system, and the horrors of the baby-farms, where, for threepence a week, the children were dosed with laudanum and treacle, administered in the shape of a popular elixir. While travelling in these regions he noticed that infanticide was practised as extensively and as legally in England as on the banks of the Ganges. No wonder that the author puts the following lament into the mouth of his heroine: "When I remember what this English people once was; the truest, the freest and the bravest, the best-natured and the best-looking, the happiest and most religious race upon the surface of this globe; and think of them now, with all their crimes and all their slavish sufferings, their soured spirits and their stunted forms; their lives without enjoyment and their death without hope;

I may well feel for them, even if I were not the daughter of their blood.' It was after this visit that the ardent Imperialist, the arch-Jingo, as many still regard him, devoted himself to the 'policy of sewage'; and henceforth, throughout his career, contrived always to find time to preach '*sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas.*' The concluding words of the novel came direct from the heart.

'That we may live to see England once more possess a free Monarchy and a privileged and prosperous People is my prayer; that these great consequences can only be brought about by the energy and devotion of our Faith is my persuasion,' he summed up the situation. 'We live in an age when to be young and to be indifferent can no longer be synonymous. We must prepare for the coming hour. The claims of the Future are represented by suffering millions; and the Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity.'

The story is of the slightest, but the pictures of social life, the gradual deterioration of the aristocracy, and the rising discontent of the democracy which began to voice its anger in Chartism are invaluable. Sketches of political and social personages abound; the sadness of the book is relieved by the humorous descriptions. Lord Marney, sharp-witted, blunt-hearted, selfish to the core, shares with Rigby the love of contradiction. 'The great difficulty with Lord Marney was to find a sufficient stock of opposition; but he lay in wait and seized any opportunity with wonderful alacrity. Even Captain Grouse could not escape him; if driven to extremities,

he would question his principles of fly-making.' Mr. Ormsby, his friend, has 'forty thousand a year, paid quarterly,' and at a full-dress reception, where peers and diplomatists are in gorgeous uniforms, demurely remarks that the only stars he possesses are four stars in India stock. Then there are old Mr. Cassilis, the dandy, who regards the New England party as a new diversion, which 'requires a doosed lot of history and all that sort of thing.' 'One must brush up one's Goldsmith,' he remarks, naïvely; Walter Gerard, the Chartist, and his friend, Stephen Morley; Devilsdust—a picture terrible because of its truth; Baptist Hutton, the peer-maker; Aubrey de Lys, the kind-hearted parson, detested by Lord Marney, who preaches the Unknown God among a hundred thousand English heathens; Sir Vavasour Firebrace, who desires to revive, nay, to increase the original dignities of the great Order of Baronets; his wife, who shows her zeal by assuring you she had defended you from many odious imputations; Trenchard, the level-headed politician, whose earlier life is depicted in *Endymion*; and, from *Coningsby*, that *grande dame*, Lady St. Julians; and Taper and Tadpole, at this time much agitated by the great Bedchamber Plot.

Tancred, or, The New Crusade, was undoubtedly the author's favourite novel. Therein he traces the youth of a high-minded idealist, who desires to effect the regeneration of the West by the restora-

tion of faith. Tancred, having attained his majority, announces his intention to travel: he wishes to visit, not Paris, nor even Rome, but the Holy Sepulchre itself. Every effort is made to dissuade him, first by his father, the Duke of Bellamont, then by a Bishop, who fails ignominiously, afterwards by Lord Eskdale, a man of the world, who is no whit more successful. A chance meeting at a society gathering with the beautiful young Lady Constance Rawleigh, inclines him to postpone his journey; but he is soon disillusioned, for when he talks to her of his religious dreams, she replies with an ignorant summary of the recently published *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, an attempt to explain, as determined by uniform laws, themselves the expression of divine power, the origin of the solar system. Disraeli never believed in evolution, as every one knows who remembers the famous Oxford speech: 'The question is this: Is man an ape or an angel? I am on the side of the angels'; and here he let his irony have free vent. 'You know all is development,' Lady Constance explained.

> 'The principle is perpetually going on. First, there was nothing, then there was something; then—I forget the next—I think there were shells, then fishes; then we come—let me see—did we come next? Never mind that; we came at last. And the next change will be something very superior to us—something with wings. Ah! that 's it: we were fishes, and I believe we shall be crows. . . . You understand, it is all science; it is not like those books in which one says one

thing and another the contrary, and both may be wrong. Everything is proved—by geology, you know. You see exactly how everything is made; how many worlds there have been; how long they lasted; what went before, what comes next. We are a link in the chain, as inferior animals were that preceded us; we in turn shall be inferior; all that will remain of us will be some relics in a new red sandstone. This is development. We had fins—we may have wings.'

Sadly Tancred walks away. 'What a spiritual mistress!' he exclaims, withal relieved at his escape. 'And yesterday for a moment I almost dreamed of kneeling with her at the Holy Sepulchre!'

Another lady crosses his path. She is interested in his views; indeed, is inclined to share them. Together they look over views of the Holy Land. But one day a tender interview is interrupted by a telegram, after reading which the lady faints. Tancred glances at the message. Railway stocks have failed: she is a gambler. This is the last straw. Dissatisfied and convinced that modern society is rotten to the core, he brushes aside all remaining obstacles, and departs Eastward-Ho! He looks for divine truth—that elusive search! He desires the East again to save the West. 'Send forth a great thought, as you have done before, from Mount Sinai, from the village of Galilee, from the deserts of Arabia, and you may remodel all their institutions, change their principles of action, and breathe a new spirit into the whole scope of their existence!'

The character of Tancred, the visionary, is very

beautifully and sympathetically depicted, and the descriptions of Syria and of life in the desert are written with all the fervour of an Oriental imagination. Beautiful, indeed, is the passage when Tancred first sees the city of his dreams:

'The path to the right leads to Bethany. The force of association brought back the last words that he had heard from a human voice. And can he sleep without seeing Bethany? He mounts the path. What a landscape surrounds him as he moves! What need for nature to be fair in a scene like this, where not a spot is visible that is not heroic or sacred, consecrated or memorable? Not a rock that is not the cave of prophets; not a valley that is not the valley of heaven-anointed kings; not a mountain that is not a mountain of God! Before him is a living, a yet breathing and existing city, which Assyrian monarchs came down to besiege, which the chariots of Pharaohs encompassed, which Roman emperors have personally assailed, for which Saladin and Cœur de Lion, the Desert and Christendom, Asia and Europe, struggled in rival chivalry—a city which Mahomet sighed to rule, and over which the Creator alike of Assyrian kings and Egyptian Pharaohs and Roman Cæsars, the framer alike of the Desert and of Christendom, poured forth the full effusion of His divinely human sorrow.

'What need of cascade and of cataract, the deep-green turf, the foliage of the fairest trees, the impenetrable forest, the abounding river, mountains of glaciered crest, the voice of birds, the bounding forms of beauteous animals,—all sights and sounds of material loveliness that might become the delicate ruins of some archaic theatre, or the lingering fanes of some forgotten faith! They would not be observed as the eye seized on Sion and Calvary; the gates of Bethlehem and Damascus; the hills of Titus; the mosque of Mahomet; and the tomb of Christ. The view of Jerusalem is the history

of the world; it is more, it is the history of earth and of heaven.'

Nearly a quarter of a century after the appearance of *Tancred* Disraeli, who was now sixty-five, published *Lothair*, which, apart from all else, possesses a certain interest as being the first novel written by a man who had been Prime Minister of England. The story is original. Most novels treat of love; in this book love is subordinated to the triangular struggle between the revolutionary societies and the Churches of England and of Rome. It is remarkable how Disraeli's opinion of the last institution changed. In *Coningsby* and *Sybil* he regretted the Reformation; Eustace Lyle, who revived the monastic custom of alms-giving, and Trafford, the most enlightened and humane of mill-owners, were both Roman Catholics. Seven or eight years later, in *The Life of Lord George Bentinck*, he did not honour 'Roman Catholic' with initial capital letters; while in *Lothair* he dwelt chiefly upon the unscrupulousness of its professors. Cardinal Grandison is supposed to be founded upon the characters of Cardinals Wiseman and Manning—the latter also appears in *Endymion*, as Nigel Penruddock—while Catesby was drawn from Monsignor Capel. Indeed, in the third volume of the first edition, owing to an oversight, 'Capel' was printed instead of 'Catesby.' The Bishop is Wilberforce, the General Cluseret, and Lothair the Marquis of Bute. Wit and humour are even more noticeable in this than in any other of

Disraeli's novels. The interview between the Cardinal and Lothair when they discuss the unwarranted announcement of the latter's conversion is one of the most delicate pieces of irony in the language. There is no falling off in power of description, but the exaggeration of style is less marked. As usual, there is a wealth of character sketches. The Duke, who every day offers his grateful thanks to Providence that his family is not unworthy of him, and whose one misfortune is that he has no home, but only many castles; St. Aldegonde, the Duke's son and heir, who 'held extreme opinions, especially on political affairs, being a republican of the deepest dye,' and 'was opposed to all privilege, and, indeed, to all orders of men, except dukes, who were a necessity'; who is spoilt and knows it; lives in terror of being bored; is avowedly interested in only two subjects: horses and tobacco; and who, in the presence of a Bishop, exclaims, 'How I hate Sundays,' and then sends his wife to put it right; the little Portuguese, Pinto, who was not an intellectual Crœsus, but his pockets were full of sixpences; the Agramonts, who 'always marry their cousins . . . they are so shy'; Hugo Bohun, who thinks every woman should marry, but no man; the artist Phœbus, who declares that printing has destroyed education, and is induced to accompany Lothair to the East because then, at last, a camel would be drawn. It was Phœbus who defined critics as 'the men who have failed in literature and art.'

In *Vivian Grey* and *Contarini Fleming* there is much of Disraeli, the man; but neither, since they were written before the author was twenty-eight, can be regarded as autobiographical in the sense of Fielding's *Amelia*, Thackeray's *Pendennis*, Dickens's *David Copperfield*, and George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*. These may be regarded, if not in each case as the best, at least as among the best works of each author. Not so *Endymion*, which is frankly autobiographical; it does not rank with any of the books written since Disraeli, now Earl of Beaconsfield, had reached years of maturity. He had now achieved greatness, had satisfied the immense ambition with which he started, and had tasted of the littleness of fame. He was a sick man and weary. It is no wonder that traces of feebleness intrude in this, his last book. Yet there are many flashes of the old wit and humour; and every now and then the author drops the mask of fiction and reveals himself. 'When you have succeeded in life according to your views . . . you will some day sigh for real power, and denounce the time when you became a public man, and belonged to any one but yourself.' 'Great men should think of Opportunity, and not of Time.' 'Time is the excuse of feeble and puzzled spirits. They make Time the sleeping partner of their lives, to accomplish what ought to be achieved by their own will.' Besides many old friends, several delightful new acquaintances are met in *Endymion*. Vigo,

the tailor: 'No man gives me the trouble which Lord Eglantine does; he has not made up his mind whether he will be a great poet or Prime Minister! "You must choose, my lord," I tell him. "I cannot send you out looking like Lord Byron if you mean to be a Canning or a Pitt."' Treeby, who is scientific as well as fashionable, and can tell the last news of the sun as well as of White's; Waldershare, who says that 'sensible men are all of the same religion,' and when asked what it is, replies: 'Sensible men never tell'; Lord Montford (bearing a strong resemblance to Lord Monmouth), who on his deathbed gives orders that his wife is not to be summoned, and when, his servants sending for her, she arrives, remarks: 'I perceive, then, that I am going to die, for I am disobeyed,' turns in his bed to conceal his countenance, and expires without a sigh or a sound—a doge as magnificent as he who complained that once he nearly had to wait.

Perhaps there is no writer of the last century in whom the personal element was so strong. *Le style c'est l'homme.* The personality which carried Disraeli, without influence, without wealth, to the Premiership, which dominated all his colleagues, stands out vividly in every one of his books. It has been said that he was a *poseur*. Undoubtedly he had a love of grandeur that sometimes betrayed him into grandiloquence and an Oriental love of splendour. This is the portion of most sons of Israel. It must never

be forgotten—indeed, it is impossible to forget—that he was a scion of that branch of the house of Lara which, on coming to England, assumed the name of Disraeli, a name never borne before or since by any other family, in order that their origin might be for ever recognised. It was his pride to belong to that race which has defied exile, massacre, spoliation, the degrading influence of the constant pursuit of gain —which has defied even time itself. 'You and I,' he said in his old age to a Jewish lad, 'belong to a race that can do anything but fail.' He is the one great Hebrew who has contributed to the glories of the literature of this, his adopted country, and with Spinoza and Heine he forms a trio of Jews notable in the history of modern letters. Almost without exception, until his day, Jews had been contemptuously and cruelly presented in imaginative literature. From Shakespeare to Thackeray and Dickens they were portrayed only as moneylenders, bailiffs, and scoundrels. It remained for him to alter this. His treatment of his compatriots was ideal, visionary even. Everywhere he sang their praises. 'At this moment, in spite of centuries, of tens of centuries of degradation, the Jewish mind exercises a vast influence in the affairs of Europe. I speak not of their laws, which you still obey; of their literature, with which your mind is saturated; but of the living Hebrew intellect.' So says Sidonia, the author's favourite character. It is Sidonia, speaking for his

creator, who declares that almost everything that is great has been done by youth. Indeed, Disraeli reverenced youth. All his heroes, from Vivian Grey to Endymion, are young; all are clever young men, trying to shape for themselves a career in the social or political world. 'The only tolerable thing in life is action, and action is feeble without youth,' he wrote. 'What if you do not obtain your immediate object? You always think you will, and the detail of the adventure is full of rapture.' The blunders of youth, he sums up, are preferable to the triumph of manhood or the successes of old age.

There are few novelists before whom the author of *Contarini Fleming*, *Popanilla*, *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, *Tancred*, and *Lothair* need bow the knee. How many authors have created a gallery of characters more magnificent or more extensive? As one thinks of the books there is conjured up in the mind a mighty phalanx: great noblemen, politicians of all ranks, of all degrees of importance and unimportance, and of both sexes; leaders of society, men and women of the world, members of the Anglican and Roman communions, members of secret societies, Chartist delegates, toadies, even a *chef*, and many high-minded, high-spirited youths and girls. He takes his readers into a world unfamiliar to most of them. He portrays the life of the great patrician families, whose genealogy is the history of England—of the Carabas, Armine, St. James, Monmouth, Marney,

Bellarmine, Beaumanoir, St. Jerome families. A guide to the town houses and country seats of the English nobility might be compiled from his pages. He describes society in all its phases, society in the time before successful manufacturers, contractors, and miners could take a place in it; when to enter the charmed circle one required a title, a million, or a genius. In years to come students will turn to his books for information as to the political and social world of his day. Indeed, it is for this his books will endure rather than for the plots, which nearly always are of secondary importance. Yet in imagination he is second only to the greatest. He is the only English writer who has poetically, as well as graphically, described the East. In his books, as in his speeches, he shows himself a great master of phrase. He is never betrayed into false pathos. His humour is never forced. His taste is never at fault. It must be admitted, however, that he was sometimes guilty of exaggeration. Yet, except perhaps in his earlier works, it did not go to the length of caricature. Than the account of the rise of the Warren into Fitz-Warene, Earl de Mowbray, and of the origin of the Dukes of Fitz-Aquitaine, descendants of a French actress, clever enough to persuade an easy-tempered monarch of this realm that the paternity of her coming babe was a distinction of which his Majesty might be proud, there is nothing finer or more scathing in *The Book of Snobs*. His pungent wit, brilliant

word-painting, and powerful character-drawing are undeniable, even as his pictures of social-political life are unrivalled. A master of satire, he was at his best when reproducing the language of clubs and lobbies, when retailing the conversations of *salons*. If on occasion no one could be so flippant, at times no one could be more dignified. When carried away by his feelings, as in *Sybil*, no one could be more impassioned or more forcible; when governed by his ideals, as in *Tancred*, no one could be more picturesque. There are few passages in English literature more beautiful and more stately than that describing the late Queen's first council.

'The council of England is summoned for the first time within her bower. There are assembled the prelates and captains and chief men of her realm; the priests of the religion that consoles, the heroes of the sword that has conquered, the votaries of the craft that has decided the fate of Empires; men grey with thought, and fame, and age; who are the stewards of divine mysteries, who have encountered in battle the hosts of Europe, who have toiled in secret cabinets, who have struggled in the less merciful strife of aspiring senates; men, too, some of them, lords of a thousand vassals and chief proprietors of provinces, yet not one whose heart does not at this moment tremble as he awaits the first presence of the maiden who must now ascend her throne. A hum of half suppressed conversation which would attempt to conceal the excitement, which some of the greatest have since acknowledged, fills that brilliant assemblage, that sea of plumes and glittering stars and gorgeous dresses. Hush! the portals open; she comes! The silence is as deep as that of a noontide forest. Attended for a moment by her royal mother and the

ladies of her court, who bow and then retire, VICTORIA ascends her throne; a girl, alone, and for the first time, amid an assemblage of men. In a sweet and thrilling voice, and with a composed mien which indicates rather the absorbing sense of august duty than an absence of emotion, THE QUEEN announces her accession to the throne of her ancestors, and her humble hope that divine providence will guard over the fulfilment of her lofty trust. The prelates and captains and chief men of her realm then advance to the throne, and kneeling before her, pledge their troth, and take the sacred oaths of allegiance and supremacy. Allegiance to one who rules over the land that the great Macedonian could not conquer, and over a continent of which even Columbus never dreamed: to the Queen of every sea, and of nations in every zone. It is not of these I would speak, but of a nation nearer her foot-stool, and which at this moment looks to her with anxiety, with affection, perhaps with hope. Fair and serene, she has the blood and beauty of the Saxon. Will it be her proud destiny at length to bear relief to suffering millions, and with that soft hand which might inspire troubadours and guerdon knights, break the last links in the chain of Saxon thraldom?'

DOUGLAS JERROLD

DOUGLAS WILLIAM JERROLD was born on January 3, 1803, and 'at peace with the world and asking to be remembered to friends,' he died on June 8, 1857. In the forties he was at the zenith of his fame and was ranked as a humorist with Thackeray and Dickens. How have the mighty fallen! His books lie neglected upon the shelf, and his plays—save only *Black-eyed Susan*—do not hold the stage.

Jerrold is to-day little more than a name that suggests caustic humour. Indeed, it is as a wit he is best remembered. 'He had less frolic than Theodore Hook, less elaborate humour than Sydney Smith, less quibble and quaintness than Thomas Hood,' Hepworth Dixon wrote of him; 'but he surpassed all these in intellectual flash and strength. His wit was all steel points.' Yet of him, as of other wits both of an earlier and a later day, what remains? A few stories, a few retorts: the rest is silence. And Jerrold was the man whom Thackeray regarded as his most important rival on the staff of *Punch*! It has been placed on record how when the author of *The Snobs of England* received his advance copy of the journal, he would tear off the wrapper, hastily turn over the

Photo. Emery Walker.

DOUGLAS WILLIAM JERROLD.

From the painting by Sir Daniel Macnee, in the National Portrait Gallery.

pages until he found 'what young Douglas has to say this week,' and, before glancing at the other contents, read the chapter of 'The Caudle Lectures,' or 'Miss Robinson Crusoe,' or whatever the contribution might be.

'I have known Thackeray for eighteen years,' Jerrold once complained, 'and I do not know him yet.' Yet it is to be believed that a good understanding existed between them, though no doubt they said many sharp things to and of one another. When Thackeray had stood sponsor to a child, it was Jerrold who exclaimed: 'Good Lord, Thackeray; I hope you did not present the infant with your own mug?' and again when, during the period of what may be called Papal Aggression, it was rumoured that Thackeray had a leaning towards the Church of Rome, and someone remarked: 'Why, they are Romanising old Thack,' Jerrold, remembering the great man's broken nose, said: 'Then I hope they will begin at his nose.' On the other hand, in one of his drawings Thackeray has represented Jerrold and himself, with both horror and amusement depicted upon their faces, in a railway carriage listening to the following conversation between an old gentleman and a young lady:—

'*Old Gentleman*: I am sorry to see you occupied, my dear Miss Wiggets, with that trivial paper *Punch*. A railway is not a place, in my opinion, for jokes. I never joke—never.

'*Miss Wiggets*: So I should think, sir.

'*Old Gentleman*: And, besides, are you aware who are the conductors of that paper, and that they are Chartists, Deists, Atheists, Anarchists, to a man? I have it from the best authority that they meet together once a week in a tavern in Saint Giles's, where they concoct their infamous print. The chief part of their income is derived from threatening letters, which they send to the nobility and gentry. The principal writer is a returned convict. Two have been tried at the Old Bailey; and as for their artist—as for their artist . . .

'*Guard*: Swin-dun! Station!

'*Exeunt two authors.*'

It was an act of friendship when Thackeray ran up to town from Leamington, where he was lecturing, to use his influence to secure the election at the Reform Club of Jerrold, whose wit had made him many enemies. At Jerrold's death, too, he co-operated with Dickens to raise a fund for the widow and children, contributing for his share the lecture on 'Week-day Preachers,' in which he made special and appreciative reference to Jerrold and his writings. The lecture was delivered on July 22, 1857, the day after the declaration of the poll of the Oxford election in which Thackeray was defeated. The audience were on the alert for some allusion to that event, and they were not disappointed, for the opening words of the discourse, delivered with comical solemnity, were: 'Walking yesterday in the High Street of a certain ancient city——' A storm of laughter deferred for some moments the completion of the sentence.

That Jerrold and Thackeray should ever have been

classed together is material for a joke against the judgment of our grandfathers. It is undeniably true that in their day *Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures* were regarded as the high-water mark of humour. Did not all London crowd to the Lyceum Theatre to see a dramatic version of the 'Lectures,' in which Mrs. Kelly enacted the *rôle* of the nagging wife?

Remembered instances of Jerrold's wit would fill many pages, and a few examples must suffice.

Mrs. Glover complained that her hair was turning grey from using essence of lavender. Jerrold asked her 'whether it was not essence of thyme?'

The bore of a company said of a certain tune: 'it carries me away with it.' 'For goodness' sake,' said Jerrold, 'let somebody whistle it.'

A friend said that A. intended to dedicate a book to Jerrold. 'Ah!' the latter remarked, with mock gravity, 'that is an awful power which A. has in his hands.'

'Is the legacy to be paid immediately?' some one inquired *à propos* of a celebrated will. 'Yes, on the coffin-nail,' came the prompt reply.

Walking to 'Our Club' from the theatre, some intoxicated men reeled up to Jerrold asking—'Can you tell us the way to the "Judge and Jury"?' 'Keep on as you are, young gentlemen,' said Jerrold; 'you are sure to overtake them.'

Jerrold disliked Albert Smith—he said that when one saw that writer's initials one had only seen two-

thirds of the truth—and was never tired of making the author of *The Adventures of Mr. Ledbury* the butt of his tongue. One day the latter protested: 'After all, you know, we row in the same boat.' 'Yes, but not with the same skulls,' was the now famous retort. As time passed, however, the two men became, if not friendly, at least less antagonistic; and it was Albert Smith who delivered Tom Taylor's address when the Dickens' Amateurs gave a performance at the Adelphi Theatre for the benefit of Jerrold's widow and children:—

> 'Two things our Jerrold left, by death removed—
> The work he wrought; the family he loved.
> The first to-night you honour: honouring these,
> You lend your aid to give the others ease.'

Jerrold's satire was always personal and usually acrid. He was of an impulsive nature and, like most men gifted with the power of repartee, he often let his tongue get the better of him, not pausing to think —perhaps at the moment not greatly caring—whether he would give pain to a friend. Afterwards he may have had a twinge of remorse, however. Certainly on his deathbed, the day before he passed away, he realised the cruelty of some of his remarks, and he gave Horace Mayhew a message to his comrades on the staff of *Punch*: 'Tell the dear boys that if I have ever wounded any of them, I have always loved them.' Leigh Hunt said that if Jerrold had the sting of the bee, he also had its honey. There is no doubt that

his words were less generous than his deeds. Many a kind action was done by him, and many a poor man or woman given timely aid. But he would not allow his charity to be imposed upon. A theatrical friend, who was both extravagant and poor, was always sending round the hat to his acquaintances and friends. Once Jerrold contributed. Twice Jerrold contributed. But when a third appeal was made he inquired: 'How much would put you straight?' 'Oh, only a four and two noughts,' was the reply. 'Well,' said Jerrold, 'this time you may put me down for—one of the noughts.'

Jerrold's father was an actor, and subsequently the manager of the Sheerness Theatre, where the little boy was brought upon the stage whenever there was any need for the appearance of a child. For about five years he went to school, and then, in December 1813, he entered the Royal Navy as a midshipman. Appointed to the guardship *Namur* stationed off the Nore, he met Clarkson Stanfield, then a foremastman and with him got up theatricals on board. The stage, however, never attracted him as it usually attracts the children of those engaged on it. In 1835 he acted at the Adelphi Theatre in a play of his own, but only for a few nights; and he occasionally took part in the performances of the Dickens' Amateurs: in Lytton's *Not so Bad as we Seem*, with Dickens, Forster, Mark Lemon, 'Orion' Horne, Wilkie Collins, and Tenniel, in the cast: and as Master Stephen in Ben Jonson's

Every Man in His Humour, with Dickens, Forster, Leech and A'Becket.

When the war of 1815 came to an end the *Namur* was paid off, and Jerrold retired from the service. He was then apprenticed to a printer in Broad Court, Bow Street. He began to write in 1819, and, while he was a compositor on *The Sunday Monitor*, went to see *Der Freischütz*, wrote a criticism on it, dropped it in the editor's box, and on the following morning was handed his own copy to set up, and also a letter to the anonymous correspondent requesting further contributions. Later he extended the sphere of his activity and wrote for three or four newspapers and several magazines, sometimes under his own name, and sometimes over a pseudonym, Henry Brownrigg. A well-known critic has suggested that Jerrold may have written *Elizabeth Brownrigge*, the story in *Fraser's Magazine* that has often been attributed to Thackeray.

It was only natural, considering his bringing-up, that Jerrold's muse should assume dramatic form. His first play, *The Duellists*, after meeting with several rejections, was produced at Sadler's Wells Theatre in 1821, under the title of *More Frightened than Hurt*, and, rechristened *Fighting by Proxy*, was subsequently performed at the Olympic Theatre. Contracting an early marriage, he was compelled to seek an additional source of income. Davidge, the manager of the Coburg Theatre, offered him a salary

to do odd jobs of translation and adaptations of plays. But Davidge was a harsh master and very mean, so mean, in fact, that when news was brought to Jerrold of the hour of the old man's death, he remarked: 'I did not think he would have died before the half price came in.'

He soon quarrelled with Davidge, and was engaged as dramatic author at a salary of five pounds a week by Elliston of the Surrey Theatre. Elliston was not a pleasant employer, as the following story shows. A young man one morning called at the theatre. Elliston denied himself to his visitor. 'Never mind,' said Jerrold to the young man, 'if Elliston won't see you once in the morning, if he sees you at all in the afternoon he 'll see you twice—at once. In the afternoon he always sees double.' It was this manager, who, in 1829, produced Jerrold's comedy *Black-eyed Susan*; *or, All in the Downs.* T. P. Cooke played William, and the play ran three hundred nights. It has been frequently revived, and has enjoyed several long runs; it has made the fortune of several managers, but from first to last the author only received seventy pounds.

Jerrold wrote many other plays, of which the best known are *The Rent Day* (1832) and the brilliant comedy *Time Works Wonders*, which in 1845 ran for seventy nights at the Haymarket Theatre. But he never made any other success. The dialogue of most of his dramatic pieces is very bright and often epi-

grammatic, but a play can never succeed only by virtue of smart dialogue, and Jerrold either could not construct a plot, or would not take the trouble to do so.

'It was a happy day for himself, the journal, and the world,' said Shirley Brooks, who lived to be the editor of the paper, 'when Thackeray found *Punch*.' The same words may be used with regard to Jerrold. From the second number, which was published in 1841, until his death, he was a constant contributor. First he sent in paragraphs and short articles mostly dealing with political subjects, which were printed over the signature 'Q.' Then followed *Punch's Letters to his Son* (republished in book form in 1845), modelled upon Lord Chesterfield's famous work, and *Punch's Complete Letter Writer* (republished in book form in 1843). With Thackeray, he wrote the first series of the *Jenkins Papers*, to which Leech furnished the illustrations. 'Jenkins' was the *Morning Post*, which these two democratic writers satirised unsparingly. But Jerrold, like so many wits, was desirous of being regarded as a serious writer, and in 1844 *The Story of a Feather* was given, week by week, to the readers of the journal. Then came the *Caudle Lectures*, and, among many later contributions, *Miss Robinson Crusoe*, and *Twelve Fireside Saints*.

In 1825 he was part proprietor with a Doctor Crucifix in a Sunday newspaper which was not a success. Twenty years later he founded *Douglas*

Jerrold's Shilling Magazine, the first shilling magazine issued, in the pages of which he published his first novel, *St. Giles and St. James*. He also, about this time, edited for Herbert Ingram, the proprietor of *The Illustrated London News*, a periodical entitled *The Illuminated Magazine*. To this he contributed *The Chronicles of Clovernook*, and *The Chronicles of a Goosequill*. Undaunted by the failure of his previous attempts, in 1846 he started *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper*. Of this he was editor and part proprietor. It met with no success.

All his life he had been worried by the eternal want of pence. For the first time he was enabled to realise comfort when, in 1852, he was appointed editor of *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* at a salary of £1000 a year. He contributed largely to its columns, and, under his guidance, the paper very considerably increased its circulation. But he was worn out, and could not long enjoy his triumph. For years before his death he suffered from chronic ill-health, and one day, when asked how he was feeling, he replied pathetically, 'As one that is waiting and is waited for.'

His principal claim to remembrance is as the author of *Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures*. These created a positive *furore* when they appeared in the pages of *Punch*. To read the series at a sitting ensures boredom, but taken one or two at a time they are undoubtedly amusing. Dickens admired them, and suggested as a subject: 'Mr. Caudle has incidentally

remarked that the housemaid is good-looking,' which suggestion may have inspired Lecture XXXII. Every one knows Mrs. Caudle. Some few unfortunates may have met her, although the author, like the Marquise in *Caste*, said 'there never was a Mrs. Caudle.' The humour is peculiar. If it be permissible to borrow a phrase from the theatre, it may be said to be low-comedy humour. There is nothing quite like it in English literature. Mrs. Caudle is always amusing, whether railing at her husband—that long-suffering, silent man—because of his (supposed) neglect of her, or because she has taken cold, or because she has 'a great desire to see France.' Perhaps she is most Caudle-like when her husband has been made a mason.

'"Now, Mr. Caudle—Mr. Caudle, I say: oh! you can't be asleep already, I know—now, what I mean to say is this; there's no use, none at all, in our having any disturbance about the matter: but at last my mind's made up, Mr. Caudle; I shall leave you. Either I know all you've been doing to-night, or to-morrow morning I quit the house. No, no, there's an end of the marriage-state, I think—an end of all confidence between man and wife—if a husband's to have secrets and keep 'em all to himself. Pretty secrets they must be, when his own wife can't know 'em! Not fit for any decent person to know, I'm sure, if that's the case. Now, Caudle, don't let us quarrel; there's a good soul, tell me what it's all about? A pack of nonsense, I dare say; still—not that I care much about it—still, I *should* like to know. There's a dear. Eh? Oh, don't tell me there's nothing in it: I know better. I'm not a fool, Mr. Caudle; I know there's a good deal in it.

Now, Caudle: just tell me a little bit of it. I'm sure I'd tell you anything. You know I would. Well? Caudle, you're enough to vex a saint! Now, don't you think you're going to sleep; because you're not. Do you suppose I'd ever suffer you to go and be made a mason if I didn't suppose I was to know the secret, too? Not that it's anything to know, I daresay; and that's why I'm determined to know it. . . . And I suppose they call you *Brother* Caudle? A pretty brother, indeed! Going and dressing yourself up in an apron like a turnpike man—for that's what you look like. . . . Now, come, Caudle; don't let's quarrel. Eh! You're not in pain, dear? What's it all about? What are you lying laughing there at? But I'm a fool to trouble my head about you."'

It was in short sketches of this kind, and slight humorous essays and character sketches, that Jerrold was at his best. Besides the *Caudle Lectures*, of his lighter works mention must be made of *Men of Character* (illustrated by Thackeray); *Cakes and Ale*, a collection of short stories and essays; and *The Chronicles of Clovernook.*

He also wrote two novels, *The Man made of Money* and *St. Giles and St. James.*

The Man made of Money was based upon Balzac's *La Peau de Chagrin.* It is the story of a marriage where each party married for money. Mrs. Pennibacker believed Mr. Jericho to be very wealthy, whereas he had only a competence; and Mr. Jericho erroneously believed Mrs. Pennibacker to have been well dowered by her first husband. The passage which describes the widow's reason for desiring the

union is alive with quiet satirical humour, and shows Jerrold at his best.

'When widow Pennibacker was first introduced to Mr. Jericho, he was whisperingly, confidentially, recommended to her indulgent notice as—a City Gentleman. Hence, Jericho appeared to the imagination of the widow, with an indescribable glory of money about him. She was a woman of naturally a lively fancy; a quality haply cultivated by her sojourn in the East, where rajahs framed in gold and jewels upon elephants were common pictures. Hence, Jericho, of the city of London, was instantly rendered by the widow a man of prodigious wealth. She gave the freest, the most imaginative translation of the words—City Gentleman. Though not handsome, he was instantly considered to be most precious. Had she looked upon the Idol Ape, Tinum Bug, whose every feature is an imperial jewel set in thickest skull of gold, and then cast a glance at Jericho, she would, we fully believe it, have chosen the City Gentleman in preference to the idol; so far, in the dizzied judgment of an impulsive, imaginative woman, did Solomon Jericho outshine Tinum Bug. And much, it must be granted, is to be allowed to Mrs. Pennibacker as a woman and a mother. A City Gentleman! what a vision! what exhalations rise from the ink that, like magic drops fallen from Circe's finger-tips, create the radiant animal upon the white sheet before us! What a picture to the imagination, the City Gentleman! Calm, plain, self-assured in the might of his wealth. All the bullion of the Bank of England makes background details; the India-house dawns in the distance, and a hundred pennants from masts in India Docks tremble in the far-off sky. Great odds these, against the simplicity of woman! the Bank, the India-house and a hundred ships! Mrs. Pennibacker had huge strength of character, but she succumbed to the unknown power of visionary wealth, to the mysterious attributes of the City Gentleman. No man could less look the part, yet Jericho bowed to the widow, a perfect enchanter.'

Mrs. Jericho, who is not unlike Mrs. Caudle, was always bothering her husband for money, until at last the latter cried 'I wish to Heaven I was made of money.' His cry was heard. He discovered that whenever he put his hand to his breast he found a hundred-pound bank note; only, though he did not know it, it was his life upon which he was drawing. He was presently reduced almost to a skeleton; and at the end, while about to light a candle with a note, he was consumed, and the gold he had distributed turned to soot and the diamonds to charcoal. It is an amusing story, though the satire is bitter: moralists may discover an allegory in the book.

In *St. Giles and St. James* Jerrold endeavoured to show, in the person of St. Giles, the victim of ignorant disregard of the social claims of the poor upon the rich, of the governed millions upon the governing few; to present the picture of the infant pauper, reared in brutish ignorance, a human waif of dust and darkness. He was accused of bedizening St. Giles at the cost of St. James, and of making Hog Lane the treasury of all the virtues to the moral sacking of Mayfair. Though this is couched in terms somewhat too extravagant, there is no doubt he was inclined to trace the miseries of the poor to the vices and oppression of the rich. He wrote sincerely, and in all good faith, and his attacks upon the rich were inspired by no mean motives. But he was a sentimentalist, and he preached the creed that his heart

dictated without leavening it by an application of common sense, or being able to correct it by a considerable knowledge of life. He had not the gift of taking a broad view of life, and his work is disfigured by a narrow philosophy.

Another blemish is the habit of digression. Sometimes he merely chattered. Sometimes he moralised. But his sermon was usually shallow, and indeed, when carefully considered, turned out to be not thought at all, but only words. 'But I come of an outraged and slandered race. What bouncing fibs have been written of me by sand-blind philosophers, and glibly repeated by gossips of all sorts at their firesides!' the feather remarks in the introduction to its story. Then follows a dissertation upon this text:

'How venerable does a lie become by length of years! Truth is never a babe, and never a hag. As at the first so at the last: full-blown yet young; her eyes lustrous through ages, and her lip ruddy and fresh as with the dews of Eden; upon her brow sits an eternity of beauty. Mrs. Falsehood is born a puling, roaring thing: its very infancy is anticipative of its old age, and stamped with the grossness of mortality. Day by day it waxes bigger and stronger; has increase of reputation; crowds of clients; until, at length, its unrighteous hoariness makes it worshipped by multitudes for no other reason save this—it has grey hairs. And so the wrinkled wizard keeps his court, and works his mischief-dealing, paralysing spells, until Truth at some time turns her sapphire eyes full upon him, and, as a bubble at a finger's touch, Falsehood is gone.'

It is very pretty, very pleasant, and in *The Story of a Feather*, or any such collection of short articles, quite in its place. But there are many similar passages in the longer works, and they retard the progress of the story to no purpose.

In Jerrold's novels, as in his plays, the plots were not carefully constructed. Indeed, a perusal of his work gives the impression that he was an indolent writer; no doubt he did a fair day's labour, but he never exerted his intellect to the full. But, again, as in his dramatic pieces, the conversation was bright enough and not infrequently studded with epigrams: 'Fortune is painted blind that she may not blush to behold the fools who belong to her.' 'Some men get on in the world on the same principle that a sweep passes uninterruptedly through a crowd.' 'Fanatics think men like bulls: they must be baited to madness, ere they are in a fit condition to die.' Though his characters were puppets—save perhaps Colonel Bones of the Militia, who enjoys an annuity of fifty pounds, and, pleading poverty, is regarded by all and sundry as a wealthy but miserly man—the author's description of them is often amusing. Of one he remarks: 'He wore his hatred of mankind as he would have worn a diamond ring—a thing at once to be put in the best light and to be very proud of'; of another, a pessimist, that 'he wouldn't allow that there was a bright side to the moon'; while Mr. Jericho is declared to be a most matter-of-fact man:

'Talk to him of Jacob's ladder, and he would ask the number of the rungs.'

Jerrold was less a humorist than a wit, and it must be admitted that his wit, though brilliant and pointed, was not always very polished. He said many racy things, and wrote several amusing sketches. He was not a great artist; he was not even literate; but his essays and humorous papers will well repay perusal. His name will be remembered, and his witty sayings will be handed down for the enjoyment of many future generations.

SAMUEL LOVER.

From a marble bust by Edward A. Foley, in the National Portrait Gallery.

SAMUEL LOVER

'At once a musician, a painter, a novelist, and a poet.' So Maginn wrote in *Blackwood* in 1837, when there were few to be found who would lightly contradict the redoubtable Doctor's critical pronouncements. Lover not only possessed all these accomplishments, but was also etcher and, in later years, dramatist, librettist, parodist, and entertainer. His versatility was surprising. A singularly precocious child, he very early showed a taste for music. As a youth, he was put into his father's stockbroking business; but, finding the clerk's stool uncongenial, he soon left the office to become a painter. He devoted himself to the painting of portraits, especially miniature-work. Almost at the outset he met with success. In 1828 he was elected a member of the Royal Hibernian Academy, and two years later he was appointed to the secretaryship of that institution. Indeed, he was a most fortunate young man. He made his first 'hit,' not as musician or as painter, but as poet. This was on the occasion of a banquet given in Dublin in 1818 in honour of Thomas Moore, when the lad of twenty-one recited some verses of his own composition, eulogising the guest of the

evening. Moore was delighted, and interested himself in the youth, whom he introduced into Dublin literary and artistic circles. Soon after, Lover, who was fond of poetry, made his first appearance as a prose-writer with an article in *The Dublin Literary Gazette* on *Ballads and Singers.* The paper attracted a considerable amount of attention, and was the cause of some controversy.

His first great success, however, was achieved with *Rory O'More, or, Good Omens,* which, written in 1826, soon became the rage, first in Ireland and subsequently in England. He naturally took advantage of his new-found popularity to publish more songs, and some of these attained a certain vogue. Still, in spite of his contributions to literature, painting was still his chief resource, and it was to that art he looked to provide him with a livelihood. He painted a miniature of Paganini when the famous musician visited Dublin in 1832, and this was very highly praised when exhibited in the same year at the Dublin Academy, and in the following year when it was hung upon the walls of the Royal Academy at Somerset House.

When he came to London in 1835 his reputation as a painter had preceded him, and he was commissioned to paint the official portrait of the Ambassador of the King of Oude, then in England on a mission; and, later, truculent Lord Brougham, in his Chancellor's robes, sat to the artist.

But Lover was not content with his achievements. It seems as if he wanted to be all things to all men; and at the height of his artistic career he began to busy himself with literary schemes. Before leaving Ireland he had been one of the founders of *The Dublin University Magazine*; and now he assisted Dickens to start *Bentley's Miscellany*, to which periodical he became a not infrequent contributor. He began to take himself seriously as a man of letters, and in 1837 made a serious bid for literary laurels by the publication of his first novel, *Rory O'More: A National Romance.*

This story did not attract much attention until he made a dramatic version which was staged at the Adelphi Theatre, where it ran for a hundred nights, with Tyrone Power, the Irish comedian, as the eponymous hero. Lover then wrote a succession of plays: comic dramas, like *The White Horse and the Peppers*, and *M'Carthy More, or, Possession nine-tenths of the Law*; and comedies like *The Happy Man*, *The Olympic Premier*, and *The Beau Ideal.* He also composed a musical drama, *The Greek Boy*, and a burlesque opera, *Il Paddy Whack in Italia*, which was produced by Balfe at the English Opera House; while later he wrote the *libretti* for two operas by Balfe, and a drama, *The Sentinel of the Alma.* But though more than one of these enjoyed success at the time, the triumph was fleeting, and to-day the very names are unfamiliar to the playgoer. The

dramatic works extended over a number of years, during which the author was working in other fields. In 1839 he collected his verse and published it in a volume bearing the title of *Songs and Ballads.*

Soon after, he contributed to *Bentley's Miscellany* his best-known work, *Handy Andy: A Tale of Irish Life*; and this was followed by the publication of a third novel, *L.S.D.*, which when issued in book-form was rechristened *Treasure Trove, or, He Would Be A Gentleman.* Then his sight failed, and he had to abandon the studio. To make up the deficiencies of his income, he gave entertainments called 'Irish Evenings' at the Princess's Concert Rooms. The performance was undertaken entirely by himself, and consisted of 'yarns', songs, and recitations, all of his own composition. In this line, as in all others he attempted, he was successful. He went on tour with the 'Punch and Judy Show' (as an irreverent contemporary styled the monologue), and subsequently repeated it in the United States and Canada. It was in America that he composed the song *The Alabama*, which won the praise of Washington Irving, and rivalled in popularity *Rory O'More.* He returned to England in 1848 and gave a new entertainment entitled *Paddy's Portfolio*, in which he made special references to his travelling experiences. He published a *Selection of Irish Lyrics* and *Volunteer Songs*, and, in 1859, broke fresh ground with a volume of parodies, '*Rival Rhymes*,

by Ben Trovato.' Soon after, his health failed and, after a long and tedious illness, he died in 1868 at St. Heliers.

How have the mighty fallen! The versatile man who loomed large in literary and artistic circles has left behind but the faintest shadow. The pictures and etchings are held in little esteem, the musical compositions are known only to the curious, the plays have not held the stage, the parodies are forgotten, the poems unread, and the stories published among *Half-Forgotten Novels.* All his work is sinking into the drear oblivion of lost things. He was versatile, and there can be no doubt versatility is a drawback. Each art is an exacting mistress, and life is too short to win the favour of more than one of the sisters. To flirt with music, smile at painting, coquette with fiction, embrace the drama, woo poetry, may be agreeable. Sometimes music, painting, fiction, drama and poetry may smile upon a mortal, as, indeed, they did upon Lover. But invariably there is treachery behind the mask. Each is jealous of her own attractions, and to win her absolutely the suitor must have no more than a passing nod for the others. He must devote his life to the task of conquering her: nothing else will serve him. And for the man who ventures upon this course it is the old Arabian Nights story over again: you win the Princess or off comes your head. If you struggle with Fame and your success is not complete, why,

a few bright gleams of pleasure: then, awakening from the dream in which life has been passed; and so, away—good-night! This has been the fate of Lover as man of letters. How far deserved this is may now be examined. His entertainments can be left severely alone; his plays need not be taken into account. There remain his parodies, his poems, and his three novels.

There were few English-writing parodists in the nineteenth century. *Rejected Addresses*, for more than forty years nothing of importance, then *Rival Rhymes* and, soon after, the burlesques of Thackeray and Calverley, Bret Harte and Sir Francis Burnand. Parody is exaggeration, and the most skilful wielder of the deadly weapon is he who exaggerates most carefully. It is open to the satirist to parody method and metre, as Bret Harte treated the threnody in Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*: the grand sweep of the chorus being the last style in the world in which Truthful James would have related his story:—

> 'The narrowing Symplegades whitened the straits of Propontis with spray.'
>
> 'And we found on his nails which were taper, what 's frequent in tapers, that 's wax.'

Or one may parody matter, obviously, as Thackeray did in *Codlingsby*, and as Burnand has done in *Strapmore*; or, subtly, as Mr. Owen Seaman (of the twentieth century), who so closely imitates that,

save for the line of sheer nonsense here and there unexpectedly interjected, his satire might pass as the genuine work of his original. Whatever the method, it is essential that the writer shall have an eye for the real weakness of his victim. He must be a humorist of no mean quality, for burlesque is the very basis and spontaneous fun the very essence of parody.

Lover failed because he was not possessed of a keen sense of humour; and because, though a careful, he was not an inspired student, and so overlooked the vulnerable spots of those he caricatured. When he attempted the travesty of Burns he never got within measurable distance of his subject. He ridiculed the dialect, but that was all.

'Syne suld you ramfeezled be,
I 'll haud thee up sae tenderly,
Wow! young guidman, I 'll bear the gree,
And fauld thee to my breast, my jo!'

With Thackeray his failure was even more complete. He makes him write a letter refusing to become a member of a committee appointed to adjudicate upon prize poems written in honour of the Burns centenary. 'A strange compliment, in sooth, to be asked to have one's ears scratched with the wretched rhymes and false metres in which some hundreds of poetasters will measure off the contents of their poetic gasometers, whose emanations are likely to be more remarkable for mephitism than brilliancy.' Could anything be more

unlike Thackeray, whose style was nearer perfection than that of any of his contemporaries, and who, whatever his faults may have been, never tortured the English language and never wrote a sentence that was not simple and lucid?

As a poet Lover is not to be ranked even among the second-rate. Yet his verses undoubtedly possess merit of no mean order. There was sufficient merit in the poem he wrote while gliding down the Alabama river to call forth the praise of no less a person than Washington Irving.

'However far, however near,
To me alike thou 'rt still more dear;
In thought, sweet love, thou 'rt with me here,
On the winding Alabama.

The watch-dog's bark I hear—
He tells me that some home is near;
And memory wakes affection's tear,
On the distant Alabama.'

Many of his poems treat of omens and superstitions, and frequently he took an old legend of his country as his theme. Occasionally he wrote with great tenderness, as in *The Angel's Whisper*, the basis of which is the beautiful superstition, once prevalent all over Ireland, that when a child smiles in its sleep it is talking with the angels. Sometimes he was reflective, as in *Memory and Hope*; but his reflections were superficial and his philosophy of the slightest. Head and shoulders above all his other songs is *Rory*

O'More, or, Good Omens. He was at his best in this ballad, in which love and tenderness mingle, and a certain sly humour plays a part, and by it as a poet he must stand or fall. It possesses a felicity of expression and a swinging rhythm unusual in his poetry, and it has a charm peculiarly his own.

'"Arrah, Kathleen, my darlint, you've teazed me enough,
Sure I've thrash'd for your sake Dinny Grimes and Jim Duff;
And I've made myself drinking your health quite a *baste*,
So I think, after that, I may *talk to the priest*."
Then Rory, the rogue, stole his arm round her neck,
So soft and so white, without freckle or speck,
And he look'd in her eyes that were beaming with light,
And he kissed her sweet lips—don't you think he was right?
"Now, Rory, leave off, sir—you'll hug me no more,
That's eight times to-day you have kissed me before."
"Then here goes another," says he, "to make sure,
For there's luck in odd numbers," says Rory O'More.'

'The author of *Handy Andy* and the *Essay on Irish Ballads*, who pandered to English prejudices by taking the stage Irishman as his hero, and treating street and stage songs as the authentic ballads of his country, was odious to the young men,' Sir Charles Gavan Duffy wrote in *Young Ireland*. Lover was blissfully unconscious of this unpopularity. Indeed, so far from being aware of it, he was convinced that he was portraying the best side of his compatriots, and in the preface to *Handy Andy* felt constrained to excuse himself. 'I have been accused, in certain quarters, of giving flattering portraits of my countrymen,'

he wrote. 'Against this charge I may plead that, being a portrait-painter by profession, the habit of taking the best view of my subject, so long prevalent in my eye, has gone deeper and influenced my mind: and if to paint one's country in its gracious aspect has been a weakness, at least, to use the words of an illustrious compatriot:

". . . the failing leans to virtue's side."

I am disinclined, however, to believe myself an offender in this particular. That I love my country dearly, I acknowledge, and I am sure every Englishman will respect me the more for loving *mine* when he is, with justice, so proud of *his*, but I repeat my disbelief that I overrate my own.'

There is certainly no ground for the assertion that he flattered the people of his land, except in the fourteenth chapter of *Treasure Trove* in which the battle of Fontenoy is described. There Lover is enthusiastic about the Irish Brigade, and endeavours to show that their achievement at a crucial moment snatched victory from the British. It is difficult to find worthy Irishmen in his books. De Lacy, in *Rory O'More*, is a high-minded gentleman, but he is more than half French; and Squire Egan, who is represented as typical of the better class of native landowners, behaves so badly in the matter of 'One furlong from the castle' as to bias all lovers of fair play against him. There are limits, even in electioneering times, to the adage, 'All's fair in love

and war.' When in *Charles O'Malley* Lady Boyle contrives to keep Calvert from appearing upon the hustings, there is no feeling excited save pleasure at her daring, but it is another story to personate an enemy and so extract from his agent the tactics to be employed. The first may or may not be strictly legitimate; there is no doubt whatever that the second is not 'playing the game.' The author asserts that Edward O'Connor is a gentleman and a patriot, but he is so dimly outlined that the character is not realised. The same objection may be raised against most of the men and women in the stories: they are the merest shadows. Indeed, there is no one character that remains in the memory, save Handy Andy, and, in spite of his loyalty to 'the Squire,' the Irish are not likely to be proud of that blundering servant.

Charles Lever also was charged with perpetuating the erroneous views current abroad as to Irish character, and for the purpose of abuse his name was often coupled with that of Lover. Of course, when two writers hailing from the same country write at the same time stories descriptive of the land where they were born, it is almost inevitable that their work should be compared. Usually one or other suffers by the comparison. In this instance, the injured party is Lover. It has thrown his work more deeply into shadow than it deserves. It cannot be denied that his merits are small when compared with those of his contemporary. He had not the imagination nor the

dare-devil humour of Lever; neither did he possess the same vivacity and irresistible sense of fun. *Charles O'Malley* is to *Handy Andy* as champagne to small beer. Lover never showed himself capable of the analysis of character, which Lever successfully attempted in his later works, notably in *The Dodd Family Abroad*; nor did he enjoy the quiet, reflective humour which the latter evinced in that book. Though neither troubled overmuch to construct a plot, yet both possessed a certain Irish raciness, and had a keen appreciation of good stories. But Lover's stories were not so good as those of Lever, and were rarely so well told. Certainly his humour was not so refined. While he did not own the powers of retort in which Douglas Jerrold rejoiced, his humour more nearly approaches that author's than that of any other writer of the early Victorian days known to posterity. It is essentially middle-class humour—that which consists in puns and mistakes in pronunciation. There is little genuine fun to be found in the mistakes of a peasant lad such as Handy Andy. Children may be amused to learn that Andy does not know what is a fork; that when he opens a bottle of soda-water he lets the contents put out the lights in the candelabra and the cork fly across the table into his master's face; and that when he is told to ice the champagne, instead of putting the bottles among the ice, he pours the champagne itself into the bucket containing the ice. This, though it may cause the

groundlings to laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve. It is the low comedian's idea of fun. What humour is there in the retort, 'And *you*'re just as ready for fun, Rory. I suppose it was *that* brought *you* here?' 'No, indeed, sir; it was the coach brought me here yestherday.' Lover could do better at times, however, and the story of O'Dempsy and the Duke of Leinster is amusing enough. 'Long life to your Grace; *you deserve to be an O'Shaughnessy.*' But Lover's taste was often at fault. Though in one way not very dissimilar from that of Lady Boyle and Calvert, to which reference has already been made, the episode of Furlong and Miss O'Grady is treated so differently that, without being indecent, it is yet undoubtedly indelicate; while the joke played on Sweeny by means of his father's tombstone is not pleasing.

'A tale cannot get on without a villain.' There is Lover's artless confession of faith as a novelist. It follows that every story has a villain, more or less desperate and more or less despicable. Shan Dhu occupies this position in *Rory O'More*, and a pinchbeck scoundrel he is. His machinations are too obviously novelist-made, and the feeble melodramatic scene in which the nymph of the cellar appears would not confound even the simplest peasant maid. Squire O'Grady in *Handy Andy* is more fool than knave, while Marshal Saxe in *Treasure Trove*, who is the hero as sinner, does not show himself a great man,

but appears simply as a ruffianly *débauché*. Indeed Lover shows himself quite out of his element when he attempts to describe social circles. The 'society' folk in *Treasure Trove* are unreal. Not one of them possesses any vitality. The Hon. Sackville Scatterbrain in *Handy Andy* can scarcely be regarded as other than a lampoon on the aristocracy; and Furlong, in the same book, is made an unmitigated ass to show the author's contempt for anglicised Irishmen. Neither do the scenes between De Lacy and Adèle Verbigny in *Rory O'More* ring true. Lover could write love-songs above the average; but time after time he failed miserably when he attempted in his novels to present love-scenes. When Rory asks Kathleen to be his wife, the girl replies,

'You couldn't say the words, Rory,—you were going to say, will I be true to you? Oh, Rory dear! I have given you my heart because I couldn't help it, and I trust you have given me yours; and oh, don't take it away from me! I must hide my love for a time. I'll hide it as a miser would his gold; and oh, Rory! don't let me find the treasure gone when I may venture to show it to the day.'

Kathleen is a nice creature, and might have thought in this way. But she is an uneducated peasant girl, and would she have been able, and could she have expressed herself in such a speech? The metaphor is well enough, but would she have employed metaphor?

Lover had no sense of character, and whatever impression the stories leave, it is not that of the men and women who figure in them. 'Ned,' the hero of

Treasure Trove, never takes hold of the reader, who, when he lays down the book, knows nothing more of him than that he is a rolling-stone, in love with a girl much his superior in station. Rory O'More is better drawn. The apparent simplicity of the young man is well depicted, and his readiness is admirable, as when he destroys Hoch's letter during his involuntary visit to the Colonel's house; and when, subsequently, he conveys the Colonel's safe-conduct to De Lacy when the latter is in danger of arrest.

As a rule Lover wasted his opportunities. In *Treasure Trove* he dealt with the invasion of '45, introducing Charles Edward, Lochiel, Tullibardine, Voltaire, and other famous historical folk; but the treatment was tedious and the manner uninspired. He causes the heroine to lock Marshal Saxe in a cupboard, and one naturally expects much amusement when the soldier is released and steps into the midst of a group of his friends who have been summoned to witness his discomfiture. But a possible good scene is muddled away and the reader is disappointed.

It seems strange that, while tenderness is by no means the least quality of the *Songs and Ballads*, there is in the novels a singular lack, indeed entire absence, of touching and pathetic passages, and perhaps no man whose poetry was so good as Lover's ever wrote in a style so deplorable and so wanting in charm.

The faults of Lover's novels far outweigh the merits, yet from them may be deduced a fairly accurate picture of Ireland in the earlier years of the last century. The peasant is portrayed at home, as it were, with his bitterness against government and his hatred for the 'collector'; always ready to promote a street-riot; hoping for an invasion, which may better and cannot harden his lot; regarding it as the unpardonable crime to 'turn prod'stant'; fearing the courts of justice more than any other institution. 'To the devil with the evidence! I never knew evidence of any good, but to ruin a man's character,' says Rory O'More; and there is every reason to believe that this was the opinion of his fellow-countrymen of low degree. But also there is shown the love of the Irish to bestow hospitality upon a stranger, which pervaded—and, indeed, still pervades—all classes; and Squire Egan the rich is no more anxious to give a hearty welcome than is Mary O'More the poor, when she harbours De Lacy during his visit from France to see if the time is ripe to foment a revolution in the 'distressful country.' Lover's books are valuable for these pictures of the life and feelings of humble Irishmen, and for this, rather than any other reason, they will be read for many a long year to come.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

It is now more than forty-two years since the morning of that sad Christmas Eve when Thackeray was found dead in his bed; and it may be asserted, without the slightest fear of contradiction, that never has his genius been so generally appreciated, his popularity so great, nor his books so widely read, as to-day.

His works have been brought out in all shapes, in all sizes, and at all prices—from the quarto *édition de luxe* to the paper-covered small octavo, suitable for the pocket. Five standard editions of the Collected Works have been issued by his publishers, and recently there has been produced a sixth containing hitherto unreprinted stories and sketches, and enriched by his only surviving daughter's biographical prefaces. At this moment no less than three publishing houses are each announcing new editions of the works of the great novelist.

Thackerayana have never been in greater demand —Thackeray and *Punch*, Thackeray in the United States, Reminiscences of Thackeray, Thackeray's London, Thackeray's Homes and Haunts, Thackeray's

Originals. Scarcely a month passes without an article on Thackeray in some magazine; while, quite recently, both the quarterlies have again devoted a considerable space to the consideration of his writings.

Success came to Thackeray comparatively late. Ainsworth published *Rookwood* when he was twenty-nine; Disraeli was famous as the author of *Vivian Grey* when he was twenty-two or twenty-three, and before he was eleven years older he had written *Contarini Fleming, The Revolutionary Epick, Alroy, Henrietta Temple,* and *Venetia*; Albert Smith was only twenty-eight when he made his mark with *The Adventures of Mr. Ledbury*; Dickens had written *Sketches by Boz* when he was twenty-four, *Pickwick* a year later, and *Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, The Old Curiosity Shop,* and *Barnaby Rudge* before he was thirty. Thackeray in his thirty-sixth year was unknown beyond the narrow circle of men and women whose business or pleasure it was to search for talent in the pages of magazines and reviews. What was the reason of this? Certainly it was not because his genius took longer to mature than that of the writers just mentioned—though, of course, the fact that as a young man he looked to art rather than to letters to provide him with a career gave a few years' start to his literary brethren. There were, however, reasons, good and sufficient, to account for the lack of appreciation from which he suffered. *Firstly*, he did not give the public a fair chance to discover him. Remember the

number of pseudonyms he used. 'Michael Angelo Titmarsh' wrote reviews in *Fraser's Magazine*, *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*, and many short stories; 'Ikey Solomon' wrote *Catherine*; 'Yellowplush' wrote the *Correspondence* and the *Diary*; 'Major Gahagan' wrote his own *Tremendous Adventures*, *The Professor*, and *Sultan Stork*, and supplied 'Mr. Wagstaff' with material for at least one of the four stories credited to that gentleman; and 'Fitz-Boodle' wrote his own *Confessions* and *Professions*, as well as a work no less important than *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*. Besides this, much of Thackeray's work was published anonymously in the periodicals, and his contributions to *Punch* over various fantastic signatures. His own name was attached only to such trifles as *Captain Rook and Mr. Pigeon*, *The Fashionable Authoress*, and *Going to see a Man Hanged*. This made it difficult even for the initiated to recognise all his work, while to the general reader each name suggested a different author. Then, too, it must not be forgotten that the only *books* he had published before *Vanity Fair* began to appear were *The Paris Sketch Book* and *Comic Tales and Sketches*, reprinted magazine articles of not the greatest value; *The Irish Sketch Book* and *From Cornhill to Grand Cairo*, both interesting, intelligent, and cleverly written books of travel; and the then unpopular *Second Funeral of Napoleon*. Remember also that the best of his earlier writings, *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* and *The Luck*

of Barry Lyndon had been serialised in *Fraser's Magazine* and had not been reprinted; while *The Snobs of England* was still appearing, snob by snob, in the pages of *Punch*.

Secondly, let it be assumed that the public, with wonderful discernment, had recognised all his writings, and, recognising them, had read them; it is then probable that, while he would have been more appreciated by the few, by the many he would have been as much neglected. And the explanation of this is that, in spite of the cleverness, the wit and wisdom, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the very truth of his earlier work, it is often most unpleasant and most painful to read.

Let the publication of *Vanity Fair* be regarded as bringing to a close the first part of his literary life: the date of the appearance of the first number of that book is the correct boundary-line between the bright, humorous, but unrecognised writer for the magazines and the successful novelist.

Leaving his criticisms of books and paintings and his short stories out of the question, there remain for consideration as the basis upon which his earlier reputation was founded, *The Yellowplush Correspondence*, *Some Passages in the Life of Major Gahagan*, *Catherine*, *A Shabby Genteel Story*, *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*, and *The Fitz-Boodle Papers*, including *Men's Wives* and *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*.

Putting aside *Major Gahagan*, which is a delightful

extravaganza, and far more amusing than *Munchausen*, there is not another quite pleasant story. They are all wonderfully clever. Their literary merit is astonishing: the style is mature, the word-pictures are delightful, and there are charming touches and beautiful passages that are Thackerayesque in their tenderness. The predominant feature, however, is intelligence; and when has the great reading public admired a book only because it is intellectual? And it must be admitted that the public is right not greatly to admire such, for it is a truism that a story which suggests chiefly the cleverness, the wit, and the brilliancy of the writer is not a complete success. Readers ask more than this; and the instinct demanding that the author's genius shall not be thought of until the book is finished, is quite sound. All the books are clever. *Catherine* is wonderful, as Carlyle rightly declared; and no one but Fielding and its author could have written the marvellous *Barry Lyndon*; but there is a want of heart, a lack of tenderness, and the books have really kept their position by virtue of the genius which created them. One is impressed by the author: one is depressed by the work.

There can be no doubt that for these early stories Thackeray drew upon his own unhappy experiences; and these, together with the cynicism that all clever young men—and most foolish ones, too—affect, give his stories a certain harshness. His purpose was

honest: he fought against snobbishness and vulgarity, against gambling, against company-promoting swindlers, against the Jack Sheppard class of novel —indeed, against everything that did not appeal to him as simple and honourable. But he did not select his weapons very carefully; and he fought with the button off the foil. It may be taken for granted that most of the principal characters in his early tales are swindlers, scoundrels, hypocrites, or fools.

Yellowplush, taken from the gutter, sees no reason why he should not listen at keyholes, read his master's letters, pry into his affairs, or do a hundred other despicable actions. He has no more than a passing pang of remorse when, for a banknote, he sells the master who, with all his faults, has been too good to him. All the people he knows do things of this sort, and he sees no reason to be ashamed of himself. In the farce is the picture of the Shum family's wretched life,—the cowardly husband, the bullying wife, the objectionable daughter, though out of the darkness looms Altamont, a good fellow, and the rather lovable Mary. Look at the actors in the tragedy—for tragedy it undoubtedly is—the scamp Yellowplush, the sharper Blewitt, the silly and snobbish Dawkins, the revengeful Lady Griffin, the insignificant Jemima, the terrible Earl, and Deuceace himself, cardsharper, swindler, fortune-hunter. Only the foolish Matilda remains, and for her loyalty much may be forgiven her: 'My Lord, my place is with

him.' The moral, of course, is that roguery comes to a bad end. But the retribution that falls upon Deuceace is planned by his father; and this occasions a revulsion of feeling which causes the sympathy to remain with the swindler until nearly the end—the most sensational Thackeray ever wrote. There is nothing in his works so terrible except the scenes between the Campaigner and Colonel Newcome. The naturalness of these *Papers* is its greatest merit —perhaps its principal fault against nature is that so many unpleasant people could scarcely be found together.

In *Catherine*, the history of jail-birds told by one of themselves, virtuous people cannot be expected. Mrs. Cat, Brock, Galgenstein, Thomas Billings, John Hayes, Mrs. Scare, and Ensign Macshane, in their several ways, are as bad as bad can be—so vicious, indeed, that one is rather sorry for Catherine: in such company she could hardly be other than she is. It must not be forgotten, however, that *Catherine* was a professed satire on the 'Newgate novels.'

A Shabby Genteel Story, which shows unmistakable signs of the author's development, presents another group of objectionable people. It is, perhaps, the most displeasing, though by no means the least clever, of all the earlier tales. It opens with a description of Margate lodging-house society, and concludes with the trapping into a mock marriage of a loving, trusting girl, the family Cinderella. Mr.

Gann, a ruined tradesman, drunk three nights a week with liquor imbibed at the 'Bag o' Nails'; Mrs. Gann, a virago; the Misses Macarty, her two daughters by a first marriage, shrews, with genteel pretensions; the tuft-hunting scoundrel Brandon, and the blackguard Cinqbars—the pleasantest character depicted is that of the honest but vulgar Fitch.

It is a relief to turn to *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*, for at last on Thackeray's literary horizon, though they are still outnumbered by hypocrites and snobs, good simple people are sighted. In the story there is a dreadful aunt and a marvellous picture of a swindling company-promoter. But pathos and tenderness are to be noted, especially in the handling of Sam's mother and wife; and the effect on the parents of the death of a child is beautifully and reverently described. But humour is lacking, and in spite of its beauties there are many who, not without some show of reason, pronounce the story dull.

Fitz-Boodle, however, is undoubtedly a humorist. In his *Confessions* are many touches which suggest the maturer Thackeray. He is a good-hearted scamp and amusing enough. His love-affairs are well told, and though Minna Löwe is a mean little wretch—perhaps she was forced to be mean by her father and *fiancé*, scoundrels both—yet Dorothea, silly, sweet Dorothea, and that sketch for Blanche Amory, Ottilia, are pleasant and interesting. But Fitz cannot be

forgiven for writing those scandalous chronicles of his friends' private lives—*Men's Wives.* Strangely enough, the last one of these, and perhaps the most admirable, the story of a heartless coquette, and a brother's vengeance, *The ——'s [Executioner's] Wife,* has not been included in the Collected Works, though it has been reprinted in the recently published volume of Thackeray's *Stray Papers.* The other tales tell of mean lives, without any redeeming sun-rays to enliven the surrounding gloom. The scoundrel Walker, the blackguard Boroski, the humbug Sir George, the foolish Ravenswing (though she improves with age), the dragon-like Miss Barry, and the selfish, vain, snobbish, and terribly vulgar Mrs. Dennis Haggarty —the history of Dennis is a tragedy second only to that of Deuceace—are so many people of whose existence one would rather not know, and of whom one would certainly rather not read.

And now *Barry Lyndon,* the greatest of all these stories, and the first in which the author's genius shines unfettered.

'In that strange apologue,' Thackeray said of *Jonathan Wild* in his lecture on Fielding, 'the author takes for a hero the greatest rascal, coward, traitor, hypocrite, that his wit and experience, both large in this matter, could enable him to devise or depict; he accompanies this villain through all the transactions of his life with a grinning deference and a wonderful mock respect, and does not leave him till he is dangling at the gallows, when the satirist makes him a low bow and wishes the scoundrel good-day.'

This is what Thackeray has done in *Barry Lyndon*, only he lets his scoundrel die of *delirium tremens* in the Fleet Prison. The stroke of genius that induced him to make Barry in all good faith tell his own adventures, places the story on a plane higher even than that on which Fielding's novel rests. Not so pure as *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*, but how much grander a conception! The humour, the satire, the remorseless irony—read the speech where Barry defends cheating at cards—the pictures of life, the *dramatis personæ*, place it not far below *Esmond* in the list of his works. But just as *Jonathan Wild* is the most neglected of Fielding's stories, so *Barry Lyndon* is the least read of Thackeray's. Mere satiric wit appeals only to the few. Work of genius though it be, it is, as its author fully realised, an unpleasant story.

With *Vanity Fair* Thackeray changed his manner. 'Oh! for a little manly, honest, God-relying simplicity, cheerful, unaffected, and humble,' he had prayed many years before in one of his earliest reviews. It was only in *Vanity Fair* he began to give it. People in 1847 for the most part purchased their fiction in monthly numbers; in green covers which contained rather exaggerated humour and somewhat extravagant pathos, or in pink covers which contained brilliant and enjoyable, if not quite reliable, descriptions of Irish or army life; and at first they did not take kindly to the less exciting, though far

more literary, sketch of English society offered in yellow covers. But gradually the novel made its way: its bright wit and attractive humour began to be recognised, its broader view of life to be appreciated, the story itself increased in interest as its characters developed, and within a few months after the appearance of the first number, Thackeray's reputation was firmly established.

The Sedleys, father and mother, and sweet Amelia —in wealth and in poverty—and Jos; the Crawleys, the old Baronet, Pitt and Jane, Rawdon and Miss Crawley; the Osbornes, the pompous old man, his daughters, and his son; the Marquis of Steyne, Mrs. O'Dowd, above all, Dobbin, and the immortal Becky. What need to write of them? Who, having read the book, can ever forget any one of them, or the chapters describing life at Brussels during the Waterloo campaign and leading up to the death of Amelia's husband.

'No more firing was heard at Brussels. The pursuit rolled miles away. Darkness came down on the field and the city —and Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart.'

Pendennis followed—with Mrs. Pendennis and her brother, the inimitable Major, Laura Bell, Emily Fotheringay and the never-to-be-forgotten Captain Costigan, the Claverings, Altamont, Blanche Amory, Captain Strong, Mirobolant, and Pen himself, his upbringing, his love-affair, his life in London, his

struggles as an author, and, best of all, his estrangement from his mother and the subsequent reconciliation.

Then *Esmond*, that brilliantly successful *tour de force*, which has rightly taken its place, not only as its author's masterpiece, but as a book to be ranked with the greatest works of historical fiction produced in any age or in any country. Esmond's boyhood—how vividly depicted; then Lord and Lady Castlewood, and little 'Trix, Harry's homecoming a year after the Viscount's death, and his widow's welcome:

'I knew you would come back, and to-day, Henry, in the anthem when they sang it, "When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion we were like them that dream." I thought, yes, like them that dream—them that dream. And it went on, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy, and he that goeth forth and weepeth, shall doubtless come home again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." I looked up from the book and saw you. I was not surprised when I saw you. I knew you would come, my dear, and saw the golden sunshine round your head. . . . Do you know what day it is? . . . It is the 29th of December—it is your birthday! But last year we did not drink it—no, no. My lord was cold, and my Harry was like to die; and my brain was in a fever; and we had no wine. But now, now you are come again, bringing your sheaves with you, my dear." She burst into a wild flood of weeping as she spoke; she laughed and sobbed on the young man's heart, crying out wildly, "bringing your sheaves with you—your sheaves with you."'

Esmond's visit to his mother's grave in the convent cemetery at Brussels is the finest piece of word-painting Thackeray ever composed.

After *Esmond*, *The Newcomes*—Clive, Ethel, Barnes, Madame de Florac and her son, Rosie and the terrible Campaigner, and Colonel Newcome. The tragedy of Colonel Newcome is very beautifully told: his ruin, the day when he is sacrificed to the malignity of the Campaigner, and accepts the alms of the brotherhood of the Charterhouse, where he remains until his death.

'At the usual evening hour the chapel bell began to toll, and Thomas Newcome's hands outside the bed feebly beat time—and, just as the last bell struck, a peculiar sweet smile shone over his face, and he lifted up his head a little, and quickly said, "*Adsum*"—and fell back. It was the word we used at school when names were called; and, lo, he whose heart was as that of a little child had answered to his name, and stood in the presence of the Master!'

The Virginians, with its portraits of the relatives and descendants of many who had figured in *Esmond*, came next; and after, *Philip*, into which is brought *The Little Sister* from *A Shabby Genteel Story*—great books both, but not among the greatest. Then *Lovel the Widower*, and, finally, the fragment of *Denis Duval*, with that description of Madame de Saverne's sorrows, and madness, and death, than which there is nothing more exquisite in any of Thackeray's books.

Few English writers have been more misunderstood and misrepresented than Thackeray. Most of his critics have thought it unnecessary to cultivate

that sympathy of standpoint which Coleridge declared to be the first qualification for sanity of judgment in matters of literature. The three principal charges brought against him as a writer are, that he too frequently interrupted the narrative to give tongue to his own reflections, that he has not drawn a really lovable man or woman, and that cynicism—an aggravated cynicism—was the keynote of his philosophy.

To the first charge Thackeray pleaded guilty. He wrote in one of the delightful *Roundabout Papers*:

> 'Perhaps of all the novel-spinners now extant, the present speaker is the most addicted to preaching. Does he not stop perpetually in his story and begin to preach to you? When he ought to be engaged with business, is he not for ever taking the Muse by the sleeve, and plaguing her with some of his cynical sermons? I cry *peccavi* loudly and heartily. I tell you I would like to be able to write a story which should show no egotism whatever, in which there should be no reflections, no cynicism, no vulgarity (and so forth), but an incident in every other page, a villain, a battle, a mystery in every chapter.'

Whether or no he too often broke the thread of the always slender plot is, to a great extent, a matter for individual judgment. It is doubtful, however, if the book would have been so interesting had the story been more carefully followed. It is the digressions, the little week-day sermons, that invest the novels with so much of their charm.

Mr. Frederic Harrison has said that he finds it an

of memory to recall the generous and fine
d s in Thackeray's books, and he complains that
nd able and affectionate men and women all
br alities which lower them and tend to make
inte esome or ridiculous. He says that Esmond
is a high-minded, almost heroic gentleman, but glum,
a regular kill-joy, something of a prig; that Colonel
Newcome is a noble-hearted soldier, but too good
for this world, and somewhat too innocent, too
transparently a child of nature; that Warrington
with all his sense and honesty is rough; that Pen-
dennis is a bit of a puppy; that Clive Newcome is
not much of a hero; that Dobbin is almost intended
to be a butt; and so on through the list of female
creations. What then? If Esmond, with all his
virtues, be somewhat priggish; if Colonel Newcome
be not a man of the world; if Warrington be rough;
Pen a little dandyish; Clive a man and not a hero;
and Dobbin have big feet? Why, while this argu-
ment shows that Thackeray never condescended to
draw—let cavillers, if they will, say, could not
draw—the conventional hero or heroine of romance,
it also helps to prove that his characters are ex-
quisitely human.

Indeed, he drew men and women as they were.
In Arthur Pendennis he endeavoured to depict a
man. 'Our friend is not Amadis or Sir Charles
Grandison,' he wrote of Philip Firmin, 'and I don't
set him up for a moment as a person to be revered

or imitated, but try to draw him faithfully, as Nature made him.' To describe people truly so minutely, so humanly, and so humanely as done, requires the unfettered genius of a broad-minded man. If he have not joined pure to pure goodness, if he have not allied the of Becky's intellect with the purity of Amelia's soul, it was not, perhaps, because he was unable to appreciate this amalgamation of fine qualities, but because he had never met with it in the world. But if in his books there be no perfect hero, certainly there is no unredeemed scoundrel. Sir Francis Clavering is so pitiably weak that regret rather than detestation is his due. Dr. Firmin is so convinced of his own honest intentions, and his moral standpoint is so perverted, that he does not realise his own immoralities. While the Marquis of Steyne, selfish, debauched old man as he is, is not without feeling, since he can sympathise with Major Pendennis when the latter receives the news of Arthur's illness. Thackeray could depict gentlemen as scarcely any other writer of fiction has done; Colonel Newcome, Esmond, Major Pendennis in spite of his worldliness, and Lord Steyne in spite of his morals. Thackeray was one of the few to recognise, and to show in Dobbin and F. J. Ridley, that a beautiful soul may dwell in an unattractive body. With regard to the contention that he could not portray good and lovable women. Is not Helen Pendennis a good woman, a

good wife, a good mother? And is not Laura clever and good and lovable? and surely Ethel Newcome is not a fool or unattractive, or Theo and Kitty Lambert other than good and true women should be. It [illegible]ve Thackeray food for reflection that while wrote [illegible]rgave him Becky Sharp and tolerated [illegible] Amory, they could not pardon him Amelia Sedley.

It is almost unneccessary to-day seriously to combat the contention that Thackeray was a cynic—and useless. If a reader cannot feel the deep tenderness that underlies all the later writings, no arguments will have any weight with him. Now, the definition of cynic is one who does not believe in virtue, or one who regards tender feeling as a fair subject for ridicule. Is the man a cynic who wrote continually in the following strain:—

'We advance in simplicity and honesty as we advance in civilisation; and it is my belief that we become better-bred and less artificial and tell more truth every day.' 'What, indeed, does not that word "cheerfulness" imply? It means a contented spirit; it means a pure heart; it means a kind and loving disposition; it means humility and charity; it means a generous appreciation of others, and a modest opinion of self.' 'Who says the world is all cold? There is the sun and the shadow. And the heaven which ordains poverty or sickness sends pity and love and succour.' 'Can we have too much of truth, and fun, and beauty, and kindness?'

Is the man a cynic who, satirical about the pomp of the second funeral of Napoleon, waxes tender at

the thought of the mother spending a few hard-earned *sous* to buy a wreath for her little child's grave; or he who, growling at cringing Nudgit, smiles approval at the quiet independence of Goldsworthy. But if it be cynical to believe that 'Wherever shines the sun, you are sure to find worth basking in it; and Knavery is the shadow at one's heels': if it be cynical to declare that grief for a departed relative will not last for ever, or that if the deceased had left you a fortune, after the first pangs of grief are over, you would the sooner be reconciled to your loss;—why, if these truisms be cynicisms, why then—and then only—was Thackeray a cynic.

He knew well enough that a novel, to be popular with the great reading public, must contain a hero and a villain, and a pretty girl pursued by the villain and rescued in the last chapter by the hero, when the villain goes to Newgate and the hero and heroine to St. George's, Hanover Square. Yet, knowing this, he went on in his own way, bravely and deliberately, preaching his sermons, and indulging his satiric humour. He was never guilty of playing to the gallery. He held it the duty of the artist to educate the public to his intellectual level. He portrayed the world as he saw it.

'I cannot help telling the truth as I view it, describing what I see,' he once said. 'To describe it otherwise than it seems to me would be falsehood in that calling in which it has

pleased Heaven to place me; treason to that conscience which says that men are weak, that truth must be told, that faults must be owned, that pardon must be prayed for, and that Love reigns supreme over all.'

Perhaps it was of this he was thinking when he wrote the last verse of *The Pen and the Album*:

> 'Nor pass the words as idle phrases by;
> Stranger! I never writ a flattery,
> Nor sign'd the page that register'd a lie.'

'If Truth were again a goddess,' Charlotte Brontë wrote in the preface to *Jane Eyre*, 'I would make Thackeray her high priest.'

The world seemed to him a sad place, more melancholy than mirthful. 'Oh! *Vanitas vanitatum!* which of us is happy in the world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?' He saw that there were people flourishing with no reverence except for prosperity, and with no eye for anything beyond success—faithless, hopeless, without charity, and he had at them with might and main. It was against pride of purse and birth and place, against haughtiness, against those who meanly admire mean things, that he fought. He bewailed the faults and follies of mankind, and gently, tenderly, chided them: roused only to anger when he met a man bullying a woman, or a stronger taking advantage of a weaker fellow-creature. But to Thackeray all was not vanity. As some one has said: 'He could not have painted Vanity Fair as he has unless Eden

had been in his inner eye.' And, indeed, he was ever ready to respect and to bow before such qualities as virtue, simplicity, honour, bravery, and unselfishness. He knew

> '. . . how fate may change and shift;
> The prize be sometimes with the fool,
> The race not always to the swift.
> The strong may yield, the good may fall,
> The great man be a vulgar clown,
> The knave be lifted over all,
> The kind cast pitilessly down.'

But, he preached,

> 'Come wealth or want, come good or ill,
> Let old and young accept their part,
> And bow before the Awful Will,
> And bear it with an honest heart.
> Who misses or who wins the prize?
> Go, lose or conquer as you can;
> But if you fail, or if you rise,
> Be each, pray God, a gentleman.'

'Do your duty,' he wrote again and again, 'do your duty with an honest heart, be reverent, be humble, be charitable!' That was the teaching of his life, and the epitome of all his lectures and lay sermons.

Not the most fervent admirer of Thackeray would claim for him equality with Swift or with Goethe, before both of whom himself did reverently bow; while to assert he has written a book that ranks with *Don Quixote* or *Resurrection* would be absurd.

Once he declared frankly that he wished to rank

as a classical author. His desire has been fully realised. To-day his name stands for culture and high intelligence, for delicate humour and great beauty of thought and understanding of the inner workings of the minds of men and women; for literary style and pure nervous undefiled English. As the author of *Esmond, Barry Lyndon, Vanity Fair, Pendennis, The Newcomes, Rebecca and Rowena* and the *Roundabout Papers,* he has taken his place among the great writers of the nineteenth century—a place in the history of English fiction second only to that of Henry Fielding.

CHARLES KINGSLEY

WHEN Charles Kingsley made his first bid for fame, Dickens was at the height of his powers and Lytton at the zenith of his popularity; Lever had done his best work and Disraeli had published the trilogy, *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*; Charlotte Brontë had issued only *Jane Eyre*; and Thackeray was bringing out *Vanity Fair* in monthly parts; Trollope had written his earliest book, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*; George Eliot and Mrs. Gaskell were unknown; and Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade had not entered the field. The years of Kingsley's activities as a novelist coincided with a period of great importance in the history of English fiction. During the years that intervened between the production of *Yeast* (1848) and *Hereward the Wake* (1866), Lytton produced *The Caxtons* series and *A Strange Story*; the Brontës concluded their career; Dickens added *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*; and Thackeray, with the publication of all his great stories, satisfied the wish he had expressed that one day he might rank with classical writers. Disraeli issued no book, but he devoted the hours he could snatch from political

CHARLES KINGSLEY.
From a photograph.

labour to the composition of *Lothair*. Mrs. Gaskell published *Mary Barton*, *North and South*, and *Moorland Cottage*; and Reade, *Peg Woffington*, *Christie Johnstone*, *It is Never too Late to Mend*, and *The Cloister and the Hearth*; while all that is best of Trollope appeared. George Eliot issued *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Romola*; and Wilkie Collins achieved great popularity, after one or two comparative failures, with *The Woman in White* and *No Name*.

Kingsley's first serious effort was the composition, in 1842, of a poetic drama on the subject of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, which was published six years later under the title of *The Saint's Tragedy*. This never became popular. It dealt with the social problems which the author could never forget, and it was, as Maurice said in the Introduction, 'a little too bold for the taste and temper of the age.' It extorted the admiration of Bunsen, however; and, indeed, contains several fine passages, and showed much promise. His poetry, however, has never made the mark achieved by his romances; yet there are some of his shorter poems that will live for many a day. *The Sands of Dee* and *The Three Fishers* have the true poetic ring; as have the charming lyrics, *The Tide River*, *The Summer Sea*, and the songs from *The Water Babies*. *The Last Buccaneer* is an admirable ballad; and the poem with which

Alton Locke concludes is, in its way, second only to *The Song of the Shirt*; while the author was at his best in the beautiful and pathetic verses, *When all the World is Young, Lad.*

'When all the world is young, lad,
And all the trees are green,
And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen!
Then hey! for boot and horse, lad,
And round the world away!
Young blood must have its course, lad,
And every dog its day.

. . . . . .

When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown,
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down:
Creep home and take your place there,
The spent and maimed among;
God grant you find one face there
You loved when all was young.'

Kingsley held strong views on the condition of the poor, and in 1848 contributed to *Politics for the People* over the pseudonym 'Parson Lot,' adopted, so Sir Leslie Stephen has recorded, on account of a discussion with his friends, in which, being in a minority of one, he had said he felt like Lot, 'when he seemed as one that mocked to his sons-in-law.' It was under this disguise that he issued the pamphlet entitled *Cheap Clothes and Nasty* (1850), which since 1881 has been reprinted as a foreword to editions of *Alton Locke*. He learned his social philosophy

from Carlyle, and there are echoes of *Sartor Resartus* in *Yeast* and of *The French Revolution* in *Alton Locke*; and he imbibed moral philosophy and the principles of religion from Frederick Denison Maurice, whom he had first met at Cambridge. Maurice was the real founder of the Christian Social Movement, but there is no name more closely associated with it than that of Charles Kingsley. Indeed, he did for Maurice what Huxley did for Spencer and Darwin: he popularised the view. Mr. Ludlow has recorded how Kingsley said to him, with his characteristic stutter: 'I am g-going to t-take a s-sermon of M-Maurice's and t-turn it into l-language understanded of the p-people.'

Kingsley joined the group of men who, under the guidance of Maurice, were endeavouring to show that the socialist movement then making headway was not necessarily antagonistic to the tenets of Christianity. This view, though now generally accepted, was then somewhat of a novelty; for, in the earlier half of the century, a socialist was regarded with a feeling that was half horror and half fear. Indeed, there are still many old people who cannot be brought to believe that a socialist can be other than a rogue. But Kingsley was never actually a socialist, though he sympathised with the sufferings of the poor and did his best to assist in the upraising of the working-classes. He advocated co-operation, and was a constant agitator for sanitary legislation. In later years,

however, he became more conservative, more contented with things as they were; and he ceased to clamour for improvements, though his sympathy with the London workman and the agricultural labourer was as active as ever.

It was only to be expected that when, as a young man, he devoted himself to the composition of works of fiction, he should produce novels with a purpose. Now, manners may change, habits fall out of fashion, but, *au fond*, men and women will always be, as they have always been, the same. Elemental passions will never be eliminated; and, under a veneer more or less thin, they will always hold sway. But the veneer will not stand rough usage. Scratch the Russ and you find the Tartar, is good the whole world over. The Court of Chancery was, perhaps, never so circumlocutory as Dickens made it; and to-day, when its methods of procedure have been reformed, much of the interest of *Bleak House* has disappeared. Novels with a purpose are useful, and, appealing to the public with greater force than a pamphlet, are often instrumental in bringing about desirable ends. But, because of this very success, they are for an age, not for all time; they may be valuable, but they are rarely works of art. The stories in which Dickens exposed abuses do not rank among his best; Charles Reade, the great-hearted, spoilt several of his books by attacks upon existing institutions; and many of the failures of Wilkie Collins may be traced to the

same cause; while the novels of Disraeli would have been far more delightful if he had not employed them to advocate the programme of his party. *It is Never too Late to Mend* loses its *objet d'être* when prison abuses are removed; but *Tom Jones* and *Vanity Fair* will never be out of date, since they deal not with institutions but with men and women.

Yeast, though classed as a novel, is much more akin to the pamphlet. The characters are merely vehicles for the expression of different views; and the story is of the slightest. The narrative is frequently interrupted by the insertion of the author's opinions, which, interesting enough in themselves, are quite out of place in a work of this kind. There are dissertations on religion—on the young man who goes over to Rome, and on the young man who is suspected of leanings towards agnosticism—even their correspondence is inserted; on poaching; on fox-hunting; and an attack, in verse, on the preservation of game. The principal topic is the position of the poor in the country; and Kingsley has drawn a picture, terrible because of its truth, of the squalid, overcrowded, fever-haunted homes and the wretched life of the labourer.

As a contrast, he has painted a collection of landlords. Lord Minchampstead, who introduces to the farmer on his estates the latest machinery, and who is determined to make his property pay; Lord Vieuxbois, who, with the best intentions in the world, only succeeds in pauperising his tenants; and Mr. Laving-

ton, the easy-going squire whose policy is to let things drift. There is the usual love-story, but the characterisation is weak, and the reader's interest is not aroused. It is remarked that the hero, Lancelot, might be another Mirabeau; but, though he spouts declamatory passages at every opportunity, he shows no particular cleverness. He is tedious to a degree, and may be dismissed as a prig. The heroine is Argemone Lavington, a girl with views on religion, which, however, she abandons with celerity when, to her great surprise, she finds herself devoted to Lancelot. Harry Verney is a typical old gamekeeper, unscrupulous but loyal to his master, a man that compels a reluctant admiration; but Tregarva, who talks unceasingly, and would have done good service on the agitation platform, is in a novel merely tedious, though much may be forgiven him as the author of such surprisingly good poetry for a gamekeeper as *A Rough Rhyme on a Rough Matter*, the ballad of a poacher's wife. In the earlier part of the book, Colonel Bracebridge, the spoilt darling of the Guards, is a well-drawn character, shrewd, capable, dissipated, feeling that he can do better things, yet muddling on in the old way. Towards the end of the story he is made to commit suicide on hearing that his mistress has borne him a son who died within a few moments of his birth. The incident is invested with other sad circumstances, but the Bracebridges do not die by their own hand for such reasons. It seems as

if the suicide was introduced to point the moral that the fast-liver comes to a bad and untimely end. The moral may be good, but its application in this case spoils the book.

The sympathy shown in *Yeast* for the labourer is, in *Alton Locke* (1849), extended to the London artisan in general and to the journeyman tailor in particular. Locke is brought up among the Dissenters and, when his views broaden, he is thrown upon the world by his mother, at the instigation of a narrow-minded preacher. He works as a tailor, and sees much of the horrible trade carried on in the sweater's den. The author is so righteously incensed by the abominations about which he writes that he frequently drops the story to express his opinions. Locke educates himself and writes poems that are meritorious. A volume of his poetry is published by subscription, and it seems as if he might rise in the world. Indeed, putting his Pegasus into heavy harness, he contrives for a while to live by his pen. But he drifts back among his Chartist friends, is mixed up—though innocently enough—with the burning of a farm, and is sentenced to three years' imprisonment. The rigours of prison life affect his health, and, shortly after his release, he dies. The story is slight, but the earnestness of the author is infectious. There is one dramatic moment—the rescue of old Porter's son from the sweater's den. The book is a sermon, and the sermon had already

been preached in *Cheap Clothes and Nasty.* But the sentiment is false; and people who buy their clothes from cheap tailors do not in real life pay the penalty by catching fever. The characterisation, however, shows a marked advance. The portraits of the dissenting clergymen are clearly limned; and Locke's snobbish, tuft-hunting cousin, the self-seeking, pushing *parvenu,* is well contrasted with the courteous, good-hearted Lord Lynedale; but Locke himself is merely a puppet, and his hopes and fears and his love are each and all mechanical. The success of the book is Mackaye, the second-hand bookseller, with the gruff manner and the tender heart, and the quaint, dry, kindly humour that is only to be found in the best of his race.

After these dissertations upon socialistic problems, Kingsley ventured into the field of historical romance, and produced the books, *Hypatia* (1853) and *Westward Ho!* (1855), upon which rests his fame as a novelist.

Hypatia, or, New Foes with Old Faces contains a good deal that will be painful to any reader and, as the author admitted, had much better be left unread by the young and innocent. Indeed, the story of Hypatia is one of the most terrible in Christian tradition, and it is not difficult to agree with Ruskin that this should for ever have been left in silence—at least by the novelist. Yet, *Hypatia* is a brilliant and forcible picture of life in the fifth century, when the

Christian Church and the Roman Empire were struggling for mastery; but the picture is not accurate or realistic, because, for one reason, it was impossible for an English writer to show how terribly bad—from the modern standpoint—were the people of that epoch. The life of the heathens could not be described, and what it told of the Christians does not reflect glory upon them. They appear in the pages of this book to have been as cruel, as brutal, as full of tricks as their pagan antagonists; but the exceptions —Augustine, Synesius, Abbot Pambo, and Aufugus (who, before he entered the monastery, had been known in the world as Arsenius, the tutor of a king and a great statesman)—were men of whom any creed might boast.

The scene is laid in Alexandria, where Jews and Goths, Pagans and Christians, Romans and Greeks, slaves and lords, jostle one another in the streets. The city is represented as a scene of vice and abomination, and is skilfully contrasted with the peaceful monastery in the country, whence the muscular Christian, Philammon, issues forth to judge for himself of the world of which the monks talk so bitterly. The representatives of the various nations and creeds are well depicted. Philammon is an Athenian, and so, of course, is his sister, the wretched Pelagia, who, sold as a slave while still a child, has been brought up to an unnameable calling by her purchaser. Hypatia, the proud virgin, is the advocate of the gods, and to

restore their worship she is willing to sacrifice herself and marry the debauched governor, Orestes. Deceived by him, and the victim of a cruel trick by Miriam, in which Philammon, all unwitting, takes part, she goes forth unflinchingly to meet death at the hands of the monks. Her friends tried in vain to save her.

'"I did what I could to die with her," said he [Eudaimon].

'"I did what I could to save her," said Philammon.

'"I know it. Forgive the words which I just spoke. Did we not both love her?"

'And the little wretch sat down by Philammon's side and, as the blood dripped from his wounds upon the pavement, broke out into a bitter agony of human tears.

'There are times when the very intensity of our misery is a boon, and kindly stuns us till we are unable to torture ourselves by thought. So it was with Philammon then. He sat there, he knew not how long.

'"She is with the gods," said Eudaimon, at last.

'"She is with the God of gods," answered Philammon: and they both were silent again.

'Suddenly, a commanding voice aroused them. They looked up, and saw before them Raphael Aben-Ezra.

'He was pale as death, but calm as death. One look into his face told them that he knew all.

'"Young monk," he said, between his closed teeth, "you seem to have loved her."

'Philammon looked up, but could not speak.

'"Then arise, and flee for your life into the farthest corner of the desert, ere the doom of Sodom and Gomorrha fall upon this accursed city. Have you father, mother, brother, sister —ay, cat, dog or bird for which you care within its walls? . . . Then take them with you, and escape, and remember Lot's wife."'

Raphael the philosopher, with his daring, his cunning, his contempt for the Gentile, his courage and self-possession, his tenderness—remember the incident of Bran and her puppies!—is one of the most striking characters in the book. The nobility of the man is shown when, without a sigh, he gives up wealth and comfort, and goes forth into the desert, penniless and alone. There he meets Victoria, the daughter of Majoricus, the prefect of a legion of Heraclian, who conquers his great heart. But his conversion to Christianity does not ring true. The history of Judaism shows that its votaries do not, even for love of a woman, abandon their faith.

Miriam, the pander, the slave-dealer, is the truest portrait ever drawn by Kingsley. Vile as she is, her lust for power, her greed, is for the child of her shame. Betrayed in her youth, in later years, while living as the humblest and poorest, she toiled, hoarded, lied, intrigued, won money for her son by every means, no matter how base. Her dying outburst is poetry itself: 'Of the house of Jesse, of the seed of Solomon; not a rabbi from Babylon to Rome dare deny that! A King's daughter am I, and a King's heart I had, and have, like Solomon's own, my son.' But it is the Goths who stand head and shoulders above the other races, for, with all their vices, they are men and heroes. Amalric is their leader, but Wulf is a prince among men. Courageous, honest, gentle, he does not care for the life in cities, and desires but to find

Asgard, the ancient city of Odin, and to receive the mead-cup from the god's own hand. Later, in Spain, at the court of Adolf and Placidia, he was persuaded to accept baptism. At the last moment, however, he turned suddenly to the bishop, and asked where were the souls of his heathen ancestors. 'In hell,' replied the worthy prelate. Wulf drew back from the font. 'He would prefer,' he said, 'if Adolf had no objection, to go to his own people.' This is a true story, but it fits well into the character of this magnificent pagan. *Hypatia* is nobly planned, but it is wanting in other respects. It is sometimes stagey, and often melodramatic, and not infrequently grandiloquent. Bulwer Lytton might have written much of this book, which is to be ranked with *The Last Days of Pompeii* and *Rienzi*, or perhaps with *Romola*, rather than with the greatest historical romances.

Kingsley, who boasted that he was a West-countryman born and bred, settled at Bideford in February 1854; and in that quiet Devonshire village wrote *Westward Ho!* A great admirer of *The Faerie Queene*, it was in the spirit of Spenserian romance that he invented The Noble Brotherhood of the Rose, which consisted of a number of young men in love with Rose Salterne, the daughter of the Mayor of Bideford. Rose flirts impartially with each and all, but falls in love with a Spanish prisoner on parole, Don Guzman Maria Magdalena Sotomayor de Soto, and when he is ransomed she elopes with him.

This, it would be thought, would cause the dissolution of the Brotherhood. Instead of disbanding, however, the members seek her in the West Indies, where she is living, married, with Don Guzman; and, with the best intentions in the world, indirectly bring about her destruction. This is the framework upon which is built the story of the adventures of Amyas Leigh in the South Seas and on the Spanish Main. The book concludes with the attempted invasion of England by the Spaniards and the defeat of the great Armada. It is a stirring story of Elizabethan heroes. It would be a bold man, however, who would vouch for the historical accuracy of the book, even though it contains references to the best known events of the reign, and though numerous historical personages flit across the pages—notably the redoubtable Sir Richard Grenvile, the unfortunate adventurer John Oxenham, the Jesuit Fathers Parsons and Campion (who are made unnecessarily ridiculous), Edmund Spenser, the poet, and Admirals Hawkins, Drake, and Raleigh. There is a Jesuit plot or two, and frequent mention of the Inquisition—that boon to the novelists who write of this period.

In *Hypatia*, as a matter of course, the author was on the side of the Christians in their struggle against the infidels; and in this book his sympathies are, naturally enough, with the Anglican and against the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, the bias is very obvious. That may be right in the Protestant clergy-

man, but it is a defect in the novelist. The reader demands, rightly, that the romancer who goes to history for his inspiration shall not give a one-sided view of his subject. To judge from *Westward Ho!* the Protestant is a good man, the Catholic in general —with the exception of Lord Howard of Effingham, for whom Kingsley says a good word—a bad man, the Spanish Catholic in particular a vile man. This attitude is ridiculous; but Kingsley was an enthusiast, and, in these matters, hot-headed. It was these qualities that caused him to attack a man greater than he, who had 'gone over to Rome,' in the article entitled *What, then, does Dr. Newman mean?* that produced the world-famous *Apologia pro vita sua*, for which no admirer of exquisite English prose, whatever his creed, can be sufficiently grateful.

Of course the characters intimately connected with the story emanated from the author's imagination. Amyas Leigh, the bold-hearted — one is almost tempted to say — buccaneer; Frank Leigh, the darling of the Court, a lion-hearted dandy; the evil genius of the book, Eustace Leigh, the weak, unprincipled young man who is converted to Catholicism— than which, apparently, Kingsley cannot imagine a worse fate; the haughty, melodramatic Don Guzman; and Salvation Yeo, by far the best creation in the tale, a man who leaves England with John Oxenham a good-hearted but blaspheming sailor, and returns years after, the sole survivor of the party, a chastened,

God-fearing man. One of the best scenes in the book is Yeo's interview with Sir Richard Grenvile, when he refuses, undismayed by threats, unmoved by persuasion, to tell his story upon oath—it being against his newly acquired principles to be sworn. The search of this mariner for his 'little maid' is well told, and his delight when she is found is admirably depicted.

Westward Ho! is the most successful of Kingsley's works of fiction, as certainly it is the most characteristic. Yet it is not so well conceived as *Hypatia*, nor is the picture of the age so acceptable; but it is far pleasanter to read. It is a fine work, yet far removed from the masterpieces; and perhaps it should rank a little below *Hypatia*.

Kingsley must be described rather as an eloquent writer (if the term is allowed) than as a great romancist. He was always the preacher first and the novelist afterwards. He was always in earnest, and equally sincere whether describing the sufferings of the London poor and of the country labourers, or the struggles between Christian and pagan, tyranny and freedom, knowledge and ignorance; whether telling the poor man of his birthright, or advocating the policy of *sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas*, or inveighing against the evils of tight-lacing. He had little pathos, and did not show himself the possessor of much humour—indeed, except in *Two Years Ago*, there is scarcely a trace of this quality in his writings.

He did not realise, apparently, the importance in a work of fiction of dramatic effect, though in *Westward Ho!* he has given a vivid description of the wreck of the *Santa Catherina*. But what would not Scott have made of the scene at the inn, where the admirals are awaiting the news of the Armada? What would not the author of *Christie Johnstone* have made of the Aberalva chapters in *Two Years Ago*? Indeed, those chapters are strangely reminiscent of the former, and Lord Scoutbush and Bowie might have stepped out of them.

Kingsley's power of characterisation was weak to a degree. Generally his characters are either lay figures or unoriginal, and when original they are usually exaggerated. The only two living women he drew are both in *Westward Ho!*—Mrs. Leigh and Salvation Yeo's little maid. Rose Salterne is but a shadow, and her charms are left to the imagination, while Grace Hervey bears too strong a resemblance to the heroine of the Sunday School book to awaken much interest. Mary Armstrong does not attract attention; and Marie, with negro blood in her veins, is too obviously introduced to serve as a text upon which to hang the author's views upon the slave question; but Mrs. Mellor is bright and agreeable enough. His most successful men are Amyas and Tom Thurnall, muscular Christians, not all animal, strong, self-reliant: the sort of hero English boys and Englishmen love to read about. But what can be

made of Frank Leigh, who talks in the following strain: 'Had either, madam, of that cynosural triad been within call of my most humble importunities, your ears had been delectate with far nobler melody.' On the other hand, Mark Armsworth is an agreeable figure; the blind, resigned Dr. Thurnall, though only dimly outlined, remains in the memory; and Elsley Vavasour, *alias* John Briggs, though overdrawn, might have been taken from life. It is an admirable character sketch.

Kingsley had a great command of language, and his scene-painting was admirable. In few English authors can there be found finer pictures than are contained in his books, whether of English landscape, as in *Yeast*, or of wretched hovels, as in *Alton Locke*, or of Alexandria and the desert of the Nile, as in *Hypatia*, or of the downs of Devonshire and the solitude of the great South American forest which Amyas and his followers traverse, as in *Westward Ho!* or of the Fenlands, as in *Hereward the Wake*.

'All day long a careful watch was kept among the branches of the mighty ceiba-tree. And what a tree that was! The hugest English oak would have seemed stunted beside it. Borne up on roots, or, rather, walls, of twisted board some twelve feet high, between which the whole crew, their ammunition and provisions were housed roomily, rose the enormous trunk, full forty feet in girth, towering like some tall lighthouse, smooth for a hundred feet, then crowned with boughs, each of which was a stately tree, whose topmost twigs were full two hundred and fifty feet from the ground. And yet it was easy for the sailors to ascend; so many natural

ropes had kind Nature lowered for their use, in the smooth lianes which hung to the very earth, often without a knot or leaf. Once in the tree, you were within a new world, suspended between heaven and earth, and, as Cary said, no wonder if, like Jack when he climbed the magic bean-stalk, you had found a castle, a giant and a few acres of well-stocked park, packed away somewhere amid that labyrinth of timber. Flower-gardens at least there were in plenty; for every limb was covered with pendent cactuses, gorgeous orchises and wild pines; and while one half of the tree was clothed in rich foliage, the other half, utterly leafless, bore on every twig brilliant yellow flowers, around which humming-birds whirred all day long. Parrots peeped in and out of every cranny, while, within the airy woodland, brilliant lizards basked like living gems upon the bark, gaudy finches flitted and chirruped, butterflies of every size and colour hovered over the topmost twigs, innumerable insects hummed from morn till eve; and when the sun went down, tree-toads came out to snore and croak till dawn. There was more life round that one tree than in a whole square mile of English soil.'

Kingsley described the scenes he had never visited with no less realism than those with which he was familiar, and for this much praise has been bestowed upon him. But, after all, to describe a place one does not know requires only a small portion of imagination, and a diligent study of the works of those well acquainted with the spot. Yet it is this power of description that distinguishes him above his contemporaries, with the exception, perhaps, of Disraeli; indeed, places him in this respect above all writers since Scott, and even Scott's landscape does not always seem so spontaneous.

WILLIAM WILKIE COLLINS.

From the painting by Sir John E. Millais, in the National Portrait Gallery.

WILKIE COLLINS

WILLIAM WILKIE COLLINS, or, as he always subscribed himself as a writer, Wilkie Collins, published his first novel, *Antonina*, in 1850, in the midst of the palmiest days of the Victorian era of fiction. And what an era that was! What writers! What books! It was the period when literary giants abounded, and each year witnessed the production of literary masterpieces.

Between 1847 and 1854 Thackeray published *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, *Esmond*, and *The Newcomes* —the cream of his work; Dickens, at the zenith of his power, wrote *David Copperfield* and *Bleak House*; Disraeli completed the trilogy which consists of *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*; the Brontës produced *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, *Villette*, *Agnes Grey*, and *Wuthering Heights*; Lytton issued *Harold*, and then struck a new vein with *The Caxtons* and *My Novel*; Mrs. Gaskell attracted attention with *Mary Barton*, *Moorland Cottage*, and *Cranford*; while Charles Kingsley won fame with *Alton Locke*, *Yeast*, and *Hypatia*; and Charles Reade rose into note with *Peg Woffington* and *Christie Johnstone*. Anthony Trollope and Whyte Melville appeared on the literary

horizon; George Meredith published a volume of poems and was writing the *Shaving of Shagpat*; but George Eliot was known only as the translator of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, and Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. Wilkie Collins, who was born the year Byron died (1824), outlived all these writers, save George Meredith, the one novelist still living who takes a place among the masters.

Wilkie Collins not only outlived his contemporaries, he outlived much of his fame. Though he survived until 1889, when he was only sixty-five, his last great story, *The New Magdalen*, which appeared month by month in the pages of the *Temple Bar Magazine*, was published in 1873. He was a man old before his time, with his health wasted and his powers of creation dimmed; and though he wrote more than a dozen novels after *The New Magdalen*, it is said that in his later years the pens of kindly companions helped his failing vigour to keep pace with the demands of the market.

Perhaps this may in part explain the neglect with which he has been treated by the critics. Within a year or two of his death, Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Harry Quilter, and Mr. Andrew Lang raised their voices in a chorus of appreciation. Since then, with the exception of a charming and all too brief article by Mr. Arthur Waugh, no one has deemed it worth while to praise or to blame.

Yet, though living when famous novelists flourished,

he was the greatest story-teller of them all. Thackeray rarely tried to tell a story. Whenever the fancy took him he interrupted the flow of his narrative to preach little week-day sermons or to interject personal asides. Even when he did try, he was not invariably successful.

'My Pegasus won't fly, so as to let me survey the field below me,' he complained. 'He has no wings, he is blind of one eye certainly; he is restive, stubborn, slow; crops a hedge when he ought to be galloping, or gallops when he ought to be quiet. He never will show off when I want him. Sometimes he goes at a pace which surprises me. Sometimes, when I most wish him to make the running, the brute turns restive, and I am obliged to let him take his own time.'

On the other hand, Dickens did endeavour to tell a story; but he paused by the way to introduce fresh characters—often interesting enough as characters, but not always necessary to the development of the plot. Dickens and Wilkie Collins met for the first time in 1851. Dickens had recently founded *Household Words,* and the younger man soon became a constant and valued contributor. It is interesting to trace the influence of one writer upon the other, and to note how Dickens endeavoured to compose a more coherent story, and how Collins began to take more pains clearly to delineate his characters.

The latter, however, always made his characters subordinate to his plot, which, intricately woven, was rigorously adhered to and faithfully carried out, inevitably, from the first to the last page.

He always maintained that since Scott and Fenimore Cooper nobody ever wrote stories. Novels there were in plenty, but the writers of tales of thrilling interest, in which the plot was thought more of, or even as much as, the *dramatis personæ*, seemed to belong to a race that had departed.

'I have always held the old-fashioned opinion that the primary object of a work of fiction should be to tell a tale; and I have never believed that the novelist who properly performed this first condition of his art was in danger, on that account, of neglecting the delineation of character—for this plain reason, that the effect produced by any narrative of events is essentially dependent, not on the events themselves, but on the human interest which is directly connected with them. It may be possible in novel-writing to present character without telling a story; but it is not possible to tell a story successfully without presenting characters; their existence as recognisable realities being the sole condition on which a story can be effectively told. The only narrative which can hope to lay a strong hold on the attention of readers is a narrative which interests them about men and women—for the perfectly obvious reason that they are men and women themselves.'

So runs a passage in the preface to *The Woman in White*.

There is no rule more sound than this. Whatever else it must be, whatever other qualities it must possess, at least the ideal novel must tell a story and must clearly present its characters.

That Wilkie Collins could tell a story is universally admitted. But even kindly disposed critics are apt

to insist that there ends his merit as a novelist. The characters in his books do not stand out, they say, always excepting a few that actors would call 'star parts,' such as Count Fosco and Mr. Fairlie in *The Woman in White*, Uncle Joseph in *The Dead Secret*, Captain Wragge and Mrs. Wragge in *No Name*, Miss Gwilt in *Armadale*, and Miss Clack in *The Moonstone*. Surely this is a very harsh judgment. It is not to be contended that he ranks with the great creators of character, with Fielding or Thackeray, with Smollett or Dickens. Yet it will be found that numerous figures remain in the mind long after the book has been laid aside.

There is one curious feature about nearly all the novels. *Vanity Fair* was declared by its author to be a novel without a hero: Wilkie Collins might have described almost any one of his books as without a hero or heroine. True it is that there are nearly always some figures which, from the standpoint of the ordinary reader of fiction, may be labelled hero and heroine. Yet Collins contrived to distribute the interest over so many characters that the so-called hero and heroine are never much in the foreground. In *The Woman in White* the hero disappears at a critical moment for nearly a volume—without being missed, too. Laura, presumably, is the heroine, yet Marian is the more marked figure. In *Basil* the interest settles not on Basil nor on Margaret, but on Mannion. In *Hide and Seek* it is

difficult to say who is the hero. Whoever it may be, it is most certainly not Valentine Blyth; yet the painter is the one character that lingers in the memory. In *The Dead Secret* Sarah Leeson is the centre of attraction, while in *Armadale* and *The Moonstone* there is no hero or heroine at all. Of course, sometimes there is a central figure. For instance, Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name*. Yet even in this case Magdalen is nearly overshadowed by Captain Wragge. In Collins's novels this breaking away from convention is scarcely noticed by the reader, who eagerly peruses the story, not to study the characters, but to solve the mystery.

'I have read the first three numbers of Wilkie's story,' said Charles Dickens, 'of *The Moonstone*. It is a very curious story, wild and yet domestic, with excellent character in it and great mystery. It is prepared with extraordinary care.'

'It is prepared with extraordinary care!' That was Collins's secret. His stories were always mysterious, yet always straightforward. Unnecessary characters were never introduced; and though sometimes there may be interpolated a narrative which does not appear to be germane to the issue, the reader may feel confident that before long a satisfactory reason for its insertion will become apparent.

In the construction of his plots he would employ the most marvellous coincidences. To further his end—to deepen a mystery or to solve it—he would

use the supernatural, if needs were, or somnambulism; or he would make his characters deaf and dumb, or blind, or epileptic, or unsound of mind or weak of nerve. Nothing came amiss to him. Most of his novels turned upon medical or legal points.

'Believing that the Novel and the Play are twin sisters in the family of fiction; that the one is a drama narrated, and the other is a drama acted; and that all the strong and deep emotions which the play-writer is privileged to excite, the novel-writer is privileged to excite also, I have not thought it either politic or necessary, while adhering to realities, to adhere to everyday realities only,' he wrote in the preface to *Basil*. 'In other words I have not stooped so low as to assure myself of the reader's belief in the probability of my story, by never once calling on him for the exercise of his faith. Those extraordinary accidents and events which happen to few men, seemed to me to be as legitimate materials for fiction to work with—when there was a good object in using them—as the ordinary accidents and events which may, and do, happen to us all. By appealing to genuine sources of interest *within* the reader's own experience, I could certainly gain his attention to begin with; but it would be only by appealing to other sources (as genuine in their way) *beyond* his own experience, that I could hope to fix his interest and excite his suspense, to occupy his deeper feelings, or to stir his nobler thoughts.'

His method of telling a story was then unusual (he has had many followers). He introduced diaries of the leading characters, letters, and collateral narratives of those concerned. This broke the sequence of events, and destroyed the even flow of the tale. His justification may be that he succeeded. But if once

or twice he succeeded, as in *The Woman in White*, or *The Moonstone*, he failed, partially at least, half a dozen times. The one great advantage derived from this method was the opportunity of enabling the characters to reveal themselves. This is done with telling effect, especially in the case of the old servant, Gabriel Betteredge, in *The Moonstone*.

Wilkie Collins took his work seriously. He had the most profound contempt for what he styled 'the holiday authors', for the men

> 'who sit down to write a book as they would sit down to a game of cards—leisurely—living people who coolly select, as an amusement "to kill time," an occupation which can only be pursued, even creditably, by the patient, uncompromising, reverent devotion of every intelligent faculty, more or less, which a human being has to give.'

He asserted that it was the duty of the novelist to do more than amuse. This opinion was the cause of his worst fault. He regarded himself as a missioner, and in nearly every one of his books preached a sermon or endeavoured to found a crusade. Only too frequently the purpose spoiled the book. He introduced morbid subjects so as to have occasion deliberately to expose the faults of the system. It seems almost as if, in his later years, he must have gone about looking for abuses in order to write a story about them. In *Basil* he inveighed against the nurses of the Mrs. Gamp type and the non-isolation of infectious cases in hospitals; in *Heart and Science*

he fell foul of vivisections; and in *The Woman in White*, only incidentally, it is true, he laid bare the evils that may result from mad-houses being in the hands of private people. None of these questions are fit subjects for discussion in works of fiction. In *Hide and Seek* he protested against the rigours of the Puritan's religion; in *No Name* against the law's non-recognition of illegitimate children; and in *The New Magdalen* and *The Fallen Leaves* against the way society regards erring women. In *The Law and the Lady* he pointed out the disadvantages of the Scottish verdict of 'Not Proven,' and in *Man and Wife* emphasised the hideousness of the Scottish marriage laws. In this last-named book he dwelt on the brutalising effect of an undue devotion to athletics in a way that, for a long time, was regarded by most people as a protest against training and vigorous exercise generally.

Wilkie Collins's first novel was *Antonina; or, The Fall of Rome.* This was an historical romance. It was an ambitious attempt for a young unpractised writer, and has considerable merit. There are some fine descriptive passages, and, on the whole, the characters are clearly drawn. The story, however, is uninteresting. The book was a failure at the time of its publication, and though, since the author made his name, it has been from time to time reprinted, it has never attracted much attention.

Basil (1852) is a great advance upon *Antonina*,

and shows signs of growing power. It is a tale of modern times, and presented in the form of an autobiography. Basil, the younger son of a wealthy country gentleman, comes up to town to study for the bar. One day he sees in an omnibus an extremely handsome girl. He falls in love at first sight, follows her home, inquires her name from an errand-boy, interviews a housemaid to learn her movements, meets her, and declares his love. Then he calls on the father, a linen-draper, to beg permission to pay his addresses, and at the latter's instigation agrees privately to marry Margaret at once, but not to claim her for a year. The reason for the secrecy is apparently to enable Basil to obtain his father's consent to the *mésalliance*, and to give him time to secure a well-paid appointment. On the very night before the year elapses the girl is seduced by Mannion, the father's chief clerk, who has been assisting to complete her education. By an accident, Basil is a witness to his own dishonour. The rest of the story deals with Basil's endeavour to avenge himself upon Mannion; and the attempt of the tradesman, who is unaware that Basil knows even the details of the horrible affair, to force him to live with his wife. The knot is cut by the discovery of compromising letters, and by the death of Margaret.

The book is frankly melodramatic, as witness the powerful scene between Basil and his father, after the former has related the tale of his marriage and

its terrible result; and the interview between Basil and Mannion after the latter comes out of the hospital, where he was taken after the dreadful thrashing inflicted upon him by the aggrieved husband. The character studies cannot be pronounced altogether successful. The distinction is well drawn between Basil's father, proud of his lineage, aristocratic to his finger-tips, and Sherwin, the coarse, uneducated, bullying tradesman, who snatches at the opportunity that presents itself to secure for a son-in-law a gentleman of birth and breeding. The somewhat mysterious Mannion is a theatrical figure, and there is an air of unreality about his villainy. Margaret is a lay figure, while the eponymous hero is the weakest character in the book. The story loses much of its strength because it is impossible to feel any sympathy for Basil, since, by his pusillanimous conduct, he brings his misfortunes on his own head. Mrs. Sherwin is admirably depicted: an unhappy, subdued woman, who, almost on her deathbed, prevents a terrible injustice. The only touch of humour in the book is introduced when Basil's elder brother appears upon the scene. His conversation with Basil, and his interview with Sherwin—were not the matter under discussion so serious—would be delightfully refreshing. As a whole, however, the story is sombre and unpleasant.

The plot of *Hide and Seek* (1854), though skilfully constructed, is not very intricate. It is, however, a

much better story, and the theme is more agreeable; while at the same time it is more crisply written, and shows an increase of tenderness and a maturing sense of humour. Mary Grice, a country dressmaker, is betrayed by a young man, 'Arthur Carr,' who is staying in the neighbourhood. He deserts her, and Mary, about to become a mother, and unable to face the shame of it, leaves her home. Shortly after the baby is born Mary dies. A Mrs. Peckover, a good-natured woman, employed in Jubber's circus, takes care of the child, who, being injured in the ring, where she appears as an infant phenomenon, loses both voice and hearing. Some years later Valentine Blythe, a middle-aged artist, touched by her beauty and her affliction, rescues her from the bullying Jubber, and takes her to live with him and his wife. The story then turns to the tracing of 'Arthur Carr,' a task which, though at first it seems wellnigh impossible, is brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

There are two obvious objections to *Hide and Seek*. One is that the child is made a deaf-mute. Collins in a note appended to the first volume of the original issue appeared to be proud because this was the first time a deaf and dumb character had been portrayed in fiction. Now in *The Dead Secret* Sarah Leeson is represented as of feeble intellect and weak nerves: this is necessary to the story; and in *The Woman in White* Anne Catherick is represented as of unsound mind: this again is necessary for the furthering of

the plot. But there is no reason why the child in *Hide and Seek* should be thus afflicted, unless to appeal to the groundlings. The other objection is that when she grows up she is shown to be in love with 'Zack' Thorpe, who eventually is discovered to be her half-brother. Under the circumstances that both were ignorant of the relationship neither was to blame, yet when the truth is told an unpleasant shock is experienced.

Much of the action takes place in Blythe's studio, and Collins, whose father was a distinguished painter, was quite at home in describing such surroundings. He contrived to insert an amusing account of a picture show, with the visitors who admire the frame and forget to speak of the picture, and the friendly Academician, who, unable to praise, yet unwilling to find fault, ejaculates: 'Yes, yes, ah! yes, yes, yes.' Blythe is a large-hearted man who at once enchains sympathy. His affection for his invalid wife pleases, and one is touched when he abandons the historical school he loved to paint portraits, which he finds more remunerative, so as to provide otherwise unobtainable luxuries for his beloved 'Lavvie.' The members of the Thorpe family are clearly presented. The stern father—who is proved to be 'Arthur Carr'—a rigid Puritan, who would not even let his son look at a picture-book on the Sabbath, and 'Zack' his son, who as a little child, like St. Aldegonde in *Coningsby*, declared that he 'hates Sundays,' and

when he grew up, being debarred from all pleasures natural to high-spirited youth, sneaked out of the house, night after night, to return half drunk during the early hours of the morning. His weakness and selfishness are depicted with an unsparing hand, and they are traced as the not unnatural result of the unnecessary harshness and lack of sympathy of his father. His mother, timid, submissive, suggests Mrs. Sherwin in *Basil*. In the first chapter of the book is a charming and tender scene between mother and son. The death of the poor erring girl, Mary Grice, is told with delicate sympathy; the narrative being put in the mouth of Mrs. Peckover.

'Peggy and me went into her room together, but we couldn't even get her to speak to us for ever so long a time; all at once she cries out, "I can't see things as I ought. Where's the woman who suckled my baby when I was alone by the roadside?" "Here," says I, "here; I've got hold of your hand. Do tell us where we can write to about you?" "Will you promise to take care of my baby, and not let it go into the workhouse?" says she. "Yes, I promise," says I. "I do indeed promise with my whole heart." "We'll all take care of the baby," says Peggy; "only you try to cheer up, and you'll get well enough to see me on Garryowen's back before we leave Bangbury—you will, for certain, if you cheer up a bit." "I give my baby," she says, clutching tight at my hand, "to the woman who suckled it by the roadside; and I pray God to bless her and forgive me, for Jesus Christ's sake!" After that she lay quite quiet for a minute or two. Then she says faintly, "Its name's to be Mary. Put it into bed to me again; I should like to touch its cheek, and feel how soft and warm it is, once more." And I took the baby out of its

crib, and lifted it, asleep as it was, into the bed by her side, and guided her hand up to its cheek. I saw her lips move a little, and bent down over her, and tried to stop crying as I did it.'

The next long story that Collins published was *The Dead Secret* (1857), in which his aim was to trace the influence of a heavy responsibility on a naturally timid woman, whose mind was neither strong enough to bear it, nor bold enough to drop it altogether. In this book the influence of Dickens is very perceptible; and Andrew Treverton and Shrowl might have stepped out of one of his stories. With the exception of Mr. Phippin, the martyr to dyspepsia, and Miss Sturch, the character-drawing is not yet satisfactory. Uncle Joseph with his musical box is amusing enough at first, but he degenerates into a bore; Rosamund is a puppet, and blind Leonard Frankland is little better. It is to be noted that both the deaf-mute in *Hide and Seek* and the blind man in the tale now under consideration are perfectly happy in their affliction. Sarah Leeson, though the pivot on which the story moves, is uninteresting. The best drawn figures are the housekeeper and steward at Porthgenna Tower, Mr. Munder and Mrs. Pentreath. Indeed, Collins is usually at his best in the portrayal of servants, and a whole gallery of them might be named. The *Secret* is deliberately allowed to glimmer on the reader at an early period, as the author was desirous

to try the experiment of letting the story depend on expectation rather than surprise. The result is not satisfactory and the experiment was never repeated. There is so much preparation, and so much expectation aroused, that the *Secret* is too slight to bear the burden. A young married woman, whose husband passionately desired a child, during her husband's absence adopts, and passes off as her own, a love-child of her maid. When the truth is known nothing happens save the restoration of a large sum of money by a wealthy couple, who do not feel the loss, to a wealthy man, who does not want it. The book is laid aside with a sigh of disappointment.

It was not until 1860, the year in which *The Mill on the Floss*, *Great Expectations*, and *The Cloister and the Hearth* appeared, that Wilkie Collins made his first great hit. Then, with the publication of *The Woman in White*, he took a prominent place among the writers of the day. The success which he achieved with this book he repeated in *No Name* (1862), *Armadale* (1866), and *The Moonstone* (1868).

Who does not remember *The Woman in White*?—Count Fosco with his white mice, and Marian Halcombe with the beautiful figure and the ugly face, and Frederick Fairlie, and Mrs. Catherick—perhaps the best-drawn character of them all?

Or *No Name*, and the misanthropic but good-hearted pauper with a pedigree, Mr. Clare, and Mag-

dalen Vanstone, and the inimitable rogue, Captain Horatio Wragge and his wife?

Or *Armadale*, with its descriptions of natural scenery, of the Norfolk Broads, a German spa, and of a wrecked ship; and Miss Gwilt and Abraham Sage, most delightful of gardeners. The latter's unconscious humour demands quotation:—

'The gardener, who still stood where he had stood from the first, immovably waiting for his next opportunity, saw it now, and gently pushed his personal interests into the first gap of silence that had opened within his reach since Allan's appearance on the scene.

'"I humbly bid you welcome to Thorpe Ambrose, sir," said Abraham Sage; beginning obstinately with his little introductory speech for the second time. "My name . . ."

'Before he could deliver himself of his name, Miss Milroy looked accidentally in the horticulturist's pertinacious face, and instantly lost her hold on her gravity beyond recall. Allan, never backward in following a boisterous example of any sort, joined in her laughter with right goodwill. The wise man of the garden showed no surprise and took no offence. He waited for another gap of silence, and walked in again gently with his personal interests, the moment the two young people stopped to take breath.

'"I have been employed in these grounds," proceeded Abraham Sage, irrepressibly, "for more than forty years."

'"You shall be employed in the grounds for forty years more if you'll only hold your tongue and take yourself off!" cried Allan, as soon as he could speak.

'"Thank you kindly, sir," said the gardener, with the utmost politeness, but with no present signs either of holding his tongue or of taking himself off.

'"Well!" said Allan.

'Abraham Sage carefully cleared his throat, and shifted his

rake from one hand to the other. He looked down the length of his own invaluable implement with a grave interest and attention, seeing, apparently, not the long handle of a rake but the long perspective of a vista with a supplementary personal interest established at the end of it. "When more convenient, sir," resumed this immovable man, "I should wish respectfully to speak to you about my son. Perhaps it may be more convenient in the course of the day? My humble duty, sir, and my best thanks. My son is strictly sober. He is accustomed to the stables, and he belongs to the Church of England—without encumbrances." Having thus planted his offspring provisionally in his master's estimation, Abraham Sage shouldered his invaluable rake, and hobbled slowly out of view.'

Or who does not remember *The Moonstone*, which has rivalled *The Woman in White* in popularity, with its romantic introduction of the mysterious Brahmins among ordinary English scenes and people; and Miss Clack and Rosanna Spearman and Godfrey Ablewhite, and Gabriel Betteredge, with his pipe and his *Robinson Crusoe*, and Sergeant Cuff, detective and rose-grower. An example of Collins's descriptive powers is to be found at the conclusion of the last-mentioned book: the statement of Mr. Murthwaite, the famous traveller, in a letter to Mr. Bruff, the solicitor of the Verinder family.

'Looking down the hill, the view presented the grandest spectacle of Nature and Man, in combination, that I have ever seen. The lower slopes of the eminence melted imperceptibly into a grassy plain, the place of the meeting of three rivers. On one side the graceful winding of the waters stretched away, now visible, now hidden by trees, as far as the eye

could see. On the other, the waveless ocean slept in the calm of the night. People this lovely scene with tens of thousands of human creatures, all dressed in white, stretching down the side of the hill, overflowing into the plain, and fringing the nearer banks of the winding rivers. Light this hall of the pilgrims by the wild red flames of cressets and torches, streaming up at intervals from every part of the innumerable throng. Imagine the moonlight of the East, pouring in unclouded glory over all—and you will form some idea of the view that met me when I looked forth from the summit of the hill.

'A strain of plaintive music, played on stringed instruments and flutes, recalled my attention to the hidden shrine.

'I turned and saw in the rocky platform the figures of three men. In the central figure of the three I recognised the man to whom I had spoken in England when the Indians appeared on the terrace at Lady Verinder's house. The other two, who had been his companions on that occasion, were no doubt his companions also on this.

'One of the spectators near whom I was standing saw me start. In a whisper he explained to me the apparition of the three figures on the platform of rock.

'They were Brahmins (he said) who had forfeited their caste in the service of the god. The god had commanded that their purification should be the purification by pilgrimage. On that night the three men were to part. In three separate directions they were to set forth as pilgrims to the shrines of India. Never more were they to look on each other's faces. Never more were they to rest in their wanderings, from the day which witnessed their separation to the day which witnessed their death.

'As those words were whispered to me, the plaintive music ceased. The three men prostrated themselves on the rock before the curtain which hid the shrine. They rose—they looked on one another—they embraced. Then they descended separately among the people. The people made way for them in dead silence. In three different directions I saw the crowd

part at one and the same moment. Slowly the grand white mass of the people closed together again. The track of the doomed men through the ranks of their fellow mortals was obliterated. We saw them no more.

'A new strain of music, loud and jubilant, rose from the hidden shrine. The crowd around me shuddered, and pressed together.

'The curtain between the trees was drawn aside, and the shrine was disclosed to view.

'There, raised high on a throne—seated on his typical antelope, with his four arms stretching towards the four corners of the earth—there, soared above us, dark and awful in the mystic light of heaven, the god of the Moon. And there, in the forehead of the deity, gleamed the yellow Diamond, whose splendour had last shone on me in England from the bosom of a woman's dress.

'Yes! after the lapse of eight centuries, the Moonstone looks forth once more over the walls of the sacred city in which its story first began. How it found its way back to its wild native land—by what accident or by what crime the Indians gained possession of their sacred gem, may be in your knowledge, but is not in mine. You have lost sight of it in England, and (if I know anything of this people) you have lost sight of it for ever.

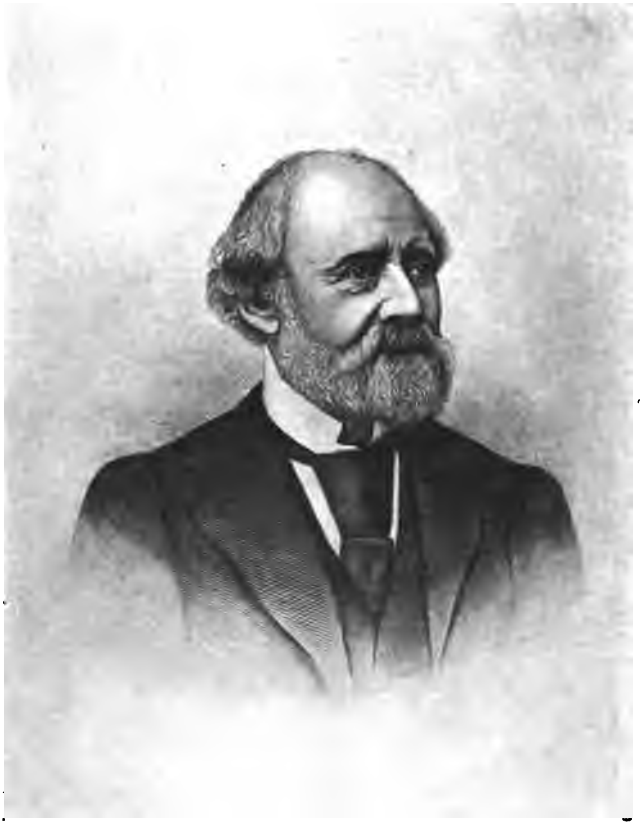
'So the years pass, and repeat each other; so the same events revolve in the cycle of time. What will be the next adventures of the "Moonstone"? Who can tell?'

After *The Moonstone* appeared *Man and Wife* (1870), *Poor Miss Finch* (1872), and *The New Magdalen* (1873), all books which would have made a reputation for a lesser man. And after these yet another round dozen stories which, though better than almost all of the sensation novels of to-day,

are entirely eclipsed by the author's best work. They were written when his powers were failing. It has been the fashion of late years to neglect the novels of Wilkie Collins. Yet the whirligig of time brings with it justice, and in due course many writers who now occupy a high place may find their level, while those that have been unjustly belittled shall once more come into their own. There remains as a monument to his genius *The Woman in White*, *No Name*, *Armadale*, *The Moonstone*, and, perhaps, *Man and Wife* and *The New Magdalen*. He was not a great artist, neither was he in a high sense literate, but he possessed a good work-a-day style, his manner was always distinctive, his meaning always clear, and at times he could write as tenderly and as humorously as some of his masters. He has no claim to rank with the greatest, but at his best he told a story with a simple directness of purpose that has never perhaps been equalled, and has certainly never been excelled by any English writer of fiction.

CHARLES READE

It has been suggested that the novels of Charles Reade should be placed between those of Eugène Sue and Dumas *père*, because he resembles the former by his power of sensational description and the latter by his instinct for dramatic narrative. Of English writers, however, Reade resembles Wilkie Collins more than any other. Both held it the first duty of the novelist to tell a story, and both to the utmost of their power endeavoured to do so. Both told their story well, in a straightforward manner, and in a style which was simple and clear and always equal to the demands made upon it. But Reade was more literate. He was also better informed. He bristled with facts, he overflowed with arguments. When perusing any one of his books the reader is struck by the signs of almost encyclopædic knowledge. He was equally at home when dealing with the herring-fisheries or trade-unions, lunatic asylums or farming, gold-digging or underwriters. Indeed, this was the cause of one of his most annoying faults. He was conscious of his knowledge and delighted to parade it. He would never let the reader alone; in his way he was as intrusive as Thackeray.



CHARLES READE.
From an engraving.

Again, Reade and Collins employed coincidences; both regarded as legitimate the use of 'what might happen.' Finally, both belonged to what, for want of a better phrase, may be called the philanthropist school of novelists. They made their books the vehicle for the exposure of abuses, and more than once each was carried away by his purpose, over-stated his case, and so by this excess of zeal irretrievably spoilt his story. Notably was this the fault with Reade's *It is Never too Late to Mend*, which was described on the title-page as 'a matter-of-fact romance.' In 1855 a certain William Austin was tried for cruelty to the convicts who had been under his charge when governor of Birmingham jail. Reade, one of the tenderest-hearted men that ever breathed, was shocked by the revelations made at the trial. He set to work immediately to study the convict system and devoted many months—during which he visited the jails of Durham, Oxford, and Reading—to this heartrending labour of love. The results were given to the world in the novel; but it is believed that, carried away by philanthropic zeal, he was guilty of some exaggeration. This Reade denied in a pamphlet entitled *It is Never too Late to Mend: Proofs of its Prison Revelations.* Whether true or untrue, the description of the brutalities practised in the prisons and the terrible existence suffered rather than lived by the convicts makes the book terrible to read even as a work of

fiction, whilst there are pages and pages of the narrative which, though faithful realism, have no artistic signification. None the less, *It is Never too Late to Mend* was a great success, and in book-form enjoyed a tremendous circulation. It was dramatised by an unauthorised hand, produced at the Grecian Theatre, injuncted by the author, and subsequently by him adapted for the stage. At the Princess's Theatre in 1865 it ran one hundred and forty-eight nights—a long run in those days; and even now in the East End and suburban theatres of the Metropolis and in the provinces it still holds the stage.

Reade was always at heart a playwright. In 1851 he served the office of Vice-President of Magdalen, and prepared the four-act tragedy *Angelo*, with which in the following year at the Olympic Theatre he made his *début* as a dramatist. This was followed at the same theatre by his adaptation of one of Scribe and Legouvé's comedies, which he called *The Ladies' Battle*. At the same time he produced at the Strand Theatre *The Lost Husband*, and at Drury Lane a drama dealing with the life of the Australian gold-diggers, entitled *Gold*.

In 1852, in collaboration with the prolific Tom Taylor, he wrote *Masks and Faces*, a comedy which still keeps the boards. Originally produced in two acts at the Haymarket Theatre, when Benjamin Webster played Triplet and Mrs. Stirling played Margaret Woffington, it was subsequently expanded

into three acts and revived in 1875 at the same theatre by the Bancrofts. Before it was brought out, Reade was persuaded to turn it into a novel. The result was published under the title of *Peg Woffington* (1852).

It is always a dangerous experiment for a novelist to dramatise his story. At every step there are pitfalls, and into most of these the unfortunate adapter contrives to stumble. Novel-dialogue is utterly impossible on the stage, although of course now and then a page may be transcribed. The dialogue of a play must not be subtle; the humour must be broadened; the characters from the first must be distinctly defined—that is to say, they must be presented, not allowed to present themselves. Everything requires to be slightly, and sometimes more than slightly, exaggerated on the stage—dialogue, humour, characters, costume; and it may be said that the successful dramatist is he who exaggerates most skilfully. Above all, the plot must not be intricate, and everything must be open and aboveboard. Even if there is a mystery the spectator must be let into the secret early in the progress of the play. The most brilliant English dramatist of the last century endeavoured to evade this axiom in *Lady Windermere's Fan*; but he was forced to give way, and to alter the end of the first act. The only known instance where the mystery has been preserved to the end is M. Hervieu's

L'Énigme (recently played in London under the title of *Cæsar's Wife*), and in this the interest is wholly dependent upon the mystery remaining unsolved throughout the earlier acts.

The difficulties of the author who turns his play into a novel are as numerous. To judge by results, it seems almost impossible for him to remove the air of exaggeration natural to the stage. The book almost invariably suggests its origin. This is the case with *Peg Woffington*. Ernest Vane, a young man from the country, comes up to town, sees Peg on the stage, and falls in love with her. She returns his affection, and is willing to give up her calling and live quietly with him over the seas, far from the scenes of her triumphs. Then Mrs. Vane appears upon the scene, and Peg, who was ignorant of the fact that her lover was married, is terribly angry. When she visits Triplet she gives vent to the passion with which she is brimming over.

'"Madam," he cries, "see what these fine gentlemen are! What business had he, with a wife at home, to come and fall in love with you? I do it for ever in my plays—I am obliged—they would be so dull else—but in real life to do it is abominable."

'"You forget, sir," said Mrs. Woffington, without moving, "that I am an actress—a plaything for the impertinence of puppies and the treachery of hypocrites. Fool! to think there was an honest man in the world, and that he had shone upon me!"

'With these words she turned, and Triplet was shocked to see the change in her face. She was pale, and her black

lowering brows were gloomy and terrible. She walked like a tigress to and fro, and Triplet dared not speak to her; indeed she seemed but half conscious of his presence. He went for nobody with her. How little we know the people we eat and go to church and flirt with! Triplet had imagined this actress an incarnation of gaiety, a sportive being, the daughter of smiles, the bride of mirth; needed but a look at her now to see that her heart was a volcano, her bosom a heaving gulf of fiery lava. She walked like some wild creature; she flung her hands up to heaven with a passionate despair, before which the feeble spirit of her companion shrank and cowered, and, with quivering lips and blazing eyes, she burst forth into a torrent of passionate bitterness.

'"But who is Margaret Woffington," she cried, "that she should pretend to honest love, or feel insulted by the proffer of a stolen regard? And what have we to do with homes, or hearts, or firesides? Have we not the play-house, its paste diamonds, its paste feelings, and the loud applause of fops and sots—hearts?—beneath loads of tinsel and paint? Nonsense! The love that can go with souls to Heaven—such love for us? Nonsense! These men applaud us, cajole us, swear to us, flatter us; and yet, forsooth, we would have them respect us too."

'"My dear benefactress," said Triplet, "they are not worthy of you."

'"I thought this man was not all dross; from the first I never felt his passion an insult. Oh Triplet! I could have loved this man, really loved him!—and I longed so to be good —oh God! oh God!'

'"Thank heaven you don't love him," cried Triplet hastily —"thank God for that!"

'"Love him? love a man who comes to me with a silly second-hand affection from his insipid baby face, and offers me half, or two-thirds, or a third of his worthless heart! I hate him! and her! and all the world!"

'"That is what I call a very proper feeling," said poor

Triplet with a weak attempt to console her. "Then break with him at once, and all will be well."

'"Break with him? Are you mad? No! since he plays with the tools of my trade, I shall fool him worse than he has me. I will feed his passion full, tempt him, torture him, play with him as the angler plays a fish on his hook. And when his very life depends on me, then by degrees he shall see me cool and cool, and freeze into bitter aversion. Then he shall rue the hour he fought with the devil against my soul, and played false with a brain and a heart like mine."'

One feels that these lines, delivered by a clever actress with a fine presence, will bring down the house. Yet they scarcely move the reader. If it is not actually clap-trap, it verges perilously upon the bombastic. None the less it is a fine dramatic passage. The wife meets the actress, and conquers her. Peg, who is a noble creature, declares to Vane that she had made a wager that she could bewitch a country gentleman's imagination. Then, of course, Vane, disgusted, turns to his wife, and with her goes back to the country. Peg is converted by John Wesley, leaves the stage, and eventually dies in the odour of sanctity.

In spite of its cleverness, the book is irritating. The reader feels that the amusing scene in the green-room at Covent Garden, in which are seen Colley Cibber, Quin, Kittie Clive, and other persons famous in the dramatic world, is introduced only to give the actress who plays Peg an opportunity to impersonate an old lady. Never was there so theatrical a device

as Peg cutting the canvas of her portrait, putting her face in the hole, and betraying the imposture by a *tear!* This is not to be pardoned, even for the sake of the charming scene that follows. Again, the entrance of Mrs. Vane when her husband is giving a dinner-party in honour of Mistress Woffington is dramatic, yet not convincing. Her very simplicity is too obviously a counterpoise to the worldly wisdom of her unconscious rival. Sir Charles Pomander is the gentleman-villain of the stage; and never outside the prompt-book was there a writer like Triplet. Yet the misfortunes of the poor dramatist are related with no unskilful hand; and, when all is said, Peg is a noble-hearted, delightful creature, far from immaculate, yet without vice, yielding to temptation only until the narrow path is clearly shown, and then following it like the poor Magdalene she was.

Reade's next book was *Christie Johnstone* (1853). This is less a story than a picture. The background is Newhaven and its fisheries. There are portrayed aristocrats. The most prominent is Viscount Ipsden, who wishes to marry his cousin Lady Barbara Sinclair. She, however, will have nothing to do with him as a lover. 'The man I love must have two things: virtues and vices; you have neither,' she tells him point-blank. My Lord is bitterly disappointed; he is also suffering from that most terrible malady, *ennui.* Dr. Aberford (drawn from a physician of the day noted for his brusqueness) is called in, and

prescribes that his patient shall make acquaintance 'with all the people of low estate who have time to be bothered with him,' and that he shall relieve one fellow-creature a day. Ipsden then goes to Newhaven, relieves a fellow-creature every day, goes out in a lifeboat in stormy weather, saves lives, meets his cousin again, and eventually marries her. There are also portrayed folk of low degree: the fishermen and their wives, notably the eponymous heroine. One hears often enough of nature's gentlemen: now is presented one of nature's gentlewomen. Strikingly handsome, with a magnificent figure, the courage of a lion and the tender heart of a mother, she is Peg Woffington over again, but Peg without her temptations and without her faults. Christie falls in love with a painter, Charles Gatty, a poor, faint-hearted young man. Mrs. Gatty, who does not approve of the union between her son and the fisher-maiden, contrives to part them; but Christie saves her lover's life, and the mother yields. The book is agreeable reading; but only Christie, Mrs. Gatty, and one or two of the minor characters 'live.' The others are conventional types of fiction.

In *Christie Johnstone* one scene stands out pre-eminent. Simply told, it touches the heart, and must for ever rank among the finest gems of English literature. It is when Ipsden, intent on good deeds, visits a poor, ugly, old woman, on whom he bestows ten shillings, and begs her to tell him of her troubles.

'"*My troubles*, laddie," cried she, trembling all over. "The sun wad set, and rise, and set again, ere I could tell ye a' the trouble I hae come through. Oh! ye need na vex yourself for an auld wife's tears; tears are a blessin', lad, I shall assure ye. Mony's the time I hae prayed for them, and could na hae them. Sit ye doon! sit ye doon! I'll no let ye gang fra my door till I hae thankit ye—but gie me time, gie me time. I canna greet a' the days of the week."'

Then she tells him of her troubles, and a long tale they are: the death of husband and children, excessive labour, ill-health, hunger, cold, and anguish; and Ipsden, moved by the sad recital, then and there promises her she shall never be in need again.

'The Scotch are icebergs, with volcanoes underneath; thaw the Scotch ice, which is very cold, and you shall get to the Scotch fire, warmer than any sun of Italy or Spain.

'His Lordship had risen to go. The old wife had seemed absorbed in her own grief; she now dried her tears.

'"Bide ye, sirr," said she, "till I thank ye."

'So she began to thank him, rather coldly and stiffly.

'"He says ye are lord," said she; "I dinna ken, an' I dinna care; but ye're a gentleman, I daur say, and a kind heart ye hae."

'Then she began to warm.

'"And ye'll never be a grain the poorer for the siller ye hae gien me; for he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord."

'Then she began to glow.

'"But it's no your siller; dinna think it—na, lad, na! Oh, fine I ken there's mony a supper for the bairns and me in yon bits metal; but I cannot feel your siller as I feel your winsome smile—the drop in your young een—an' the sweet words ye gied me, in the sweet music o' your Soothern tongue,

Gude bless ye!" (Where was her ice by this time?) "Gude bless ye! and I bless ye!"

'And she did bless him; and what a blessing it was;—not a melodious generality, like a stage parent's, or papa's in a damsel's novel. It was like the son of Barak on Zophim.

'She blessed him, as one who had the power and the right to bless or curse.

'She stood on the high ground of her low estate and her afflictions, and demanded of their Creator to bless the fellow-creature that had come to her aid and consolation.

'This woman had suffered to the limits of endurance; yesterday she had said, "Surely the Almighty does na *see* me a' these years!"

'So now she blessed him, and her heart's blood seemed to gush into words.

'She blessed him by land and water.

'She knew most mortal griefs; for she had felt them.

'She warned them away from him one by one.

'She knew the joys of life; for she had felt their want.

'She summoned them one by one to his side.

'"And a fair wind to your ship," cried she, "an' the storms aye ten miles to leeward o' her."

'"Many happy days, an' weel spent," she wished him.

'"His love should love him dearly, or a better take her place."

'"Health to his side by day; sleep to his pillow by night."

'A thousand good wishes came, like a torrent of fire, from her lips, with a power that eclipsed his dreams of human eloquence; and then, changing in a moment from the thunder of a Pythoness to the tender music of some poetess mother, she ended—

'"An' oh, my boenny, boenny lad, may ye be wi' the rich upon the airth a' your days—AND WI' THE PUIR IN THE WARLD TO COME!"'

How much more impressive is this than the scene when Christie Johnstone performs a splendid act of courage in seizing Sandy Liston and keeping him from entering the public-house: '"I 'll no' let ye go, *sae look me i' the face*: Flucker's dochter, your auld comrade that saved your life at Holy Isle. Think o' his face—an' look in mine's—an' strike me!"' for this is immediately followed by a scene in which the girl is routed by a mouse. It seems almost incredible that the man who wrote the magnificent passage just quoted—a passage which for beauty of thought and conception and for dignity can hold its own against any other in the language—should have introduced in the same book an absurd burlesque duel, in which the peer is made to act as no gentleman ever could!

After writing these stories Reade again devoted himself to work for the stage. In 1854 no less than five dramas came from his pen. Two were written with Tom Taylor; *Two Loves and a Life*, produced at the Adelphi Theatre; and *The King's Rival*, produced at the St. James's Theatre. This last was followed at the same house in quick succession by two plays, in the composition of which he had no assistance: *Honour before Titles* and *Peregrine Pickle* (a dramatic version of the famous novel). He also adapted from the French of Messieurs Moreau, Girardin, and Delacour, *The Courier of Lyons*, which was staged at the Princess' Theatre. Years later,

under the title of *The Lyons Mail*, it was revived at the Lyceum Theatre by Sir Henry (then Mr.) Irving, in whose *répertoire* it was included. In 1855 he wrote a play, *Art*, which, when played at the Olympic Theatre in 1863, was rechristened *Nance Oldfield*. A consideration of his dramatic works, however, does not come within the scope of this article.

In the following year appeared the first of his long novels, *It is Never too Late to Mend*. The plot is essentially melodramatic and the characters are not carefully delineated. It may be said of them that 'those who are good are very, very good, and those who are bad are horrid.' One figure, however, remains in the memory: Isaac Levi the Jew. In English fiction the Jew had hitherto been represented as a scoundrel or a bailiff or a money-lender. From the Jew that Shakespeare drew to those portrayed by Thackeray and Dickens there is not a pleasant character. Disraeli inaugurated a change; but his treatment of his fellows was visionary, ideal even. Levi, though he is theatrical, is made the instrument by which the wrongdoers are punished and the good exalted. His love for his dead wife and for his home enlists the sympathies of the reader, and there is something noble about him when he turns to his persecutor, and, disclaiming all intention to threaten, gravely addresses him: '"Be advised, then. Do not trample upon one of my people. Nations and men that oppress us do not thrive"'; and then pleads:

'"I have been driven to and fro like a leaf these many years, and now I long for rest. Let me rest in my little tent, till I rest for ever. Oh, let me die where those I loved have died, and there let me be buried."' The book contains graphic descriptions of the life of an English farmer and the owner of an Australian sheep-run; also of the discovery of gold in Australia and of the life of the gold-diggers in the first days of the rush. Yet one of Bret Harte's short stories tells more of the men who forgather at a mining-camp than all Reade's chapters.

Next, in rapid succession, came five more novels: *The Course of True Love Never did Run Smooth* (1857); *Jack of All Trades* (1858); *The Autobiography of a Thief* (1858), which dealt with the career of Thomas Robinson, a character familiar to the readers of *It is Never too Late to Mend*; *Love me Little, Love me Long* (1859); and *White Lies* (1860), which had been serialised some three years earlier in *The London Journal*, and was subsequently dramatised and staged at the Princess's Theatre under the title of *The Double Marriage*. No one of these is conspicuously successful. They contain all the faults of the author and only some of his merits. In each book one is impressed by the unreality of the whole in spite of the amazing realism of its parts. There are fine passages, sensational descriptions, and signs of great imaginative power; but humour is lacking, and the characters are not distinct creations. While

writing these stories, however, Reade was serving his apprenticeship to the art of novel-writing, an apprenticeship which it seems none can neglect, not even the most gifted. With the exception of Smollett, who published *The Adventures of Roderick Random* when he was twenty-seven and *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* three years later, and of Lever who published *Harry Lorrequer* when he was thirty, there is scarcely an author who has written his greatest work before he was in the prime of life. Richardson was fifty-one when *Pamela* was published; Fielding over forty when he issued *Tom Jones*; Goldsmith was thirty-seven when he wrote *The Vicar of Wakefield*; and the first volume of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* appeared when Sterne was forty-six; while Swift was fifty-nine when *The Travels of Lemuel Gulliver* was given to the world. Scott was forty-three when *Waverley* was brought out (though he planned it some years earlier); Thackeray was forty-one when he wrote *Esmond*, and Dickens thirty-eight when *David Copperfield* first saw the light; Disraeli was over forty when *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred* appeared, and more than sixty when he wrote *Lothair*; Kingsley was thirty-seven when he published *Westward Ho!* Wilkie Collins composed *The Woman in White*, *No Name*, and *The Moonstone* between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five; George Eliot was thirty-nine when *Adam Bede* and fifty when *Middlemarch*

appeared; while Trollope wrote *Barchester Towers* when he was forty-two, and Meredith was fifty-one when *The Egoist* proclaimed that another master of fiction had entered the field prepared to hold his own against all comers.

Reade was forty-five when he published in the columns of *Once a Week* a medieval romance entitled *A Good Fight.* The editor, however, tampered with his 'copy,' and the author brought the story to an abrupt conclusion. In 1861 Reade published it, having in the interval entirely rewritten and revised it, under the title of *The Cloister and the Hearth.* This work will presently be considered.

Following the historical novel, Reade returned to his realistic method in a sequel to *Love me Little, Love me Long,* which, when published in *All the Year Round,* was entitled *Very Hard Cash,* but was subsequently issued in book-form as *Hard Cash* (1863). This story is a dashing narrative of adventure, and contains fine passages descriptive of a university boat-race, of a trial, and of a fire at a madhouse. It was Reade's purpose to expose the system of private lunatic asylums and to point out the evils which came to pass when the proprietor was an unscrupulous man, content to accept patients without instituting vigorous inquiries.

In 1865 a new magazine, *The Argosy,* was founded and edited by Mrs. Henry Wood. To give this a good send-off, Reade was invited to furnish the serial.

He contributed *Griffith Gaunt; or, Jealousy*, which immediately it had run its course was published in book-form, and some ten years later was dramatised by the author and called *Kate Peyton's Lovers*, though when revived in 1878 at the Olympic Theatre it was rechristened *Jealousy*. The theme of the book is unpleasant, though it did not deserve the violent attacks of the reviewers, whom Reade, in retaliation, denounced as 'prurient prudes.' It is a powerful, human story of a man's baseness, and for strength and appeal to pity ranks high above all the other works of the author, save only *The Cloister and the Hearth* and *Christie Johnstone*.

The next book, *Foul Play*, was written in collaboration with Dion Boucicault, though on the title-page of at least one modern edition only the name of Charles Reade appears. The story opens in London merchant circles, passes on to the convict settlements in Australia, then to an uninhabited and unknown island in the tropical zone of the Pacific Ocean, and concludes in London. It is a tale of a forgery and of a man wrongly convicted. The 'impossible isle,' as it has been called, is most marvellously described, and the life of the shipwrecked couple is told with Defoe-like minuteness. Though not one of the most popular of Reade's novels, it is a most enthralling romance. The mystery is well maintained, the characters more carefully drawn than is usual in this author's works, and the descriptive passages admirable.

The remaining works are *Put Yourself in His Place* (1870), which contained an attack upon the trades-union system of 'rattening,' which was especially prominent in Sheffield (called in the novel Hellborough), and which caused his life to be threatened by the ratteners of that town; *A Terrible Temptation* (1871), which was more fiercely attacked by the reviewers than even *Griffith Gaunt*; *The Wandering Heir* (1872), a story suggested by the famous Tichborne case; *A Simpleton* (1873); *A Woman Hater* (1877), which dealt with the insanitary conditions of villages —the village portrayed under the name of Stoke Row was really Hill Stoke, which was situated upon his brother's estate of Ipsden; *Single Heart and Double Face* (1884), based upon his play of the same name, produced at Edinburgh in the previous year, and *The Perilous Secret* (1884), founded upon a drama entitled *Love and Money*, written by himself and Henry Pettitt, and produced at the Adelphi Theatre in 1882. Mention must be made of Reade's adaptation of Zola's novel *L'Assommoir*, which under the title of *Drink* achieved an immense success.

The ground has now been cleared for a brief consideration of *The Cloister and the Hearth*. All the other books which Reade wrote, in spite of their merits, would have secured him but a passing fame; as compared with his other stories, this is as gold to dross. He is one of the few great authors whose reputation is founded upon a single book. From the

day of the publication of *The Cloister and the Hearth* it has been acclaimed a masterpiece, and it passed at once into the region of classical fiction. Mr. Swinburne wrote that 'a story better conceived, better constructed, or better related, it would be difficult to find anywhere'; and less distinguished critics were as enthusiastic, and exhausted the superlatives of praise. In an introduction to the cheap edition, published some years ago, Sir Walter Besant pronounced it 'the greatest historical novel in the language.' It has frequently been compared with *Esmond* and *Romola*. It may be said, however, that it seems to be less laboured than George Eliot's story—*Romola* reads as if the period had been studied for the purpose of the novel; the other as if it had sprung naturally from the author's intimate acquaintance with the times—also that it is inferior in style and artistic conception to *Esmond*. The Reade of *The Cloister and the Hearth* is not the Reade of the other novels. Elsewhere he showed himself tender-hearted, loathing cruelty, hating abuses; now for the first time he revealed himself an idealist. The great fault of striving after 'situations' and other theatrical effects, which spoilt many of his works, is in this book barely perceptible. It is almost the only one of his novels which he did not afterwards dramatise. For this once he also abandoned the realistic method, and he showed an artistic sense that elsewhere was not always in evidence. Every page displays ripe

scholarship and immense knowledge; the better informed the reader the more amazed and impressed is he at the truthfulness of the descriptions.

The book is a magnificent survey of the manners and customs of Holland and Germany, of France and Italy at the end of the fifteenth century, just before the great dawn of learning. The modern novelist who takes for his subject only a particular corner, and who is rapidly becoming a specialist of the sea, or the tropical zone, or the London slum, or Monte Carlo, may well stand amazed before this vast canvas. Real and imaginary folk are intermingled with true artistic skill. Froissart, Gringoire, Deschamps, the Pope of the day, Luther, Villon, Coquillart, Erasmus as a child, Margaret Van Eyck (sister of the famous painter), and the disciples of Fust the printer, Sweynheim, and Pannartz. But the imaginary characters are the more interesting. There is the family of Elias and Catherine of Tergou, Giles the dwarf with the tremendous voice, and little Kate the cripple; Sybrandt and Cornelis the ne'er-do-weels, and handsome Gerard the writer, monk, and hero; Peter Brandt, and his red-haired daughter Margaret, one of the most beautiful figures in the world's literature; Ghysbrecht Van Swieten the swindling, miserly burgomaster; Martin Wittenhaagen the old soldier, who serves the Brandts; Denys the Burgundian, the lover of women, with his greeting: '*Courage, l'ami, le diable est mort*'; and Pietro the painter, who turns

his masterpiece to the wall so that dullards may not vex his ears with ignorant abuse, and who will take advice from any one who will but see what he *has* done. All these, and many more, are creatures of flesh and blood. Besides, across the pages march princesses and peasants, priests and soldiers, doctors and shoemakers, chambermaids and sellers of pardons.

This medieval romance is a dashing tale of adventure: of fights with leopards, bloodhounds, bears, robbers on the highways, and cut-throats at the inns. But its chief merit is the love-story, so sad and so tender. 'Not a day passes over the earth but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words, and suffer noble sorrows,' so run the opening lines. And it is the love and the sorrow of Gerard and Margaret that seize the reader's interest at the beginning and hold it until the end. Perhaps the finest portion of the book is after Gerard, by a forged letter, is led to believe that Margaret is dead, and takes the monk's vows. It is impossible to forget the sermon at the great Church of St. Laurens, when Gerard sees Margaret; when he goes to his father's house to curse the false brothers; and the discovery of the baby in the hermit's cell by its unconscious father.

'Clement laid down his psaltery softly and began to rock his new treasure in his arms, and to crone over him a little lullaby well known in Tergou, with which his own mother had often set him off.

'And the child sank into a profound sleep upon his arm. And he stopped croning and gazed on him with infinite tenderness, yet sadness; for at that moment he could not help thinking what might have been but for a piece of paper with a lie in it.

'He sighed deeply.

'The next moment the moonlight burst into his cell, and with it, and in it, and almost as swift as it, Margaret Brandt was down at his knee with a timorous hand upon his shoulder.

'"Gerard, you do not reject us? You cannot."'

So long as English novels are read, so long—by virtue of its sadness, its tenderness, its sympathy, and its humanity—*The Cloister and the Hearth* will rank among the masterpieces. 'They don't write such books now,' says the old man, re-reading this favourite of his youth; and none may gainsay him.

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

SOME few years ago a well-known man of letters, writing of Victorian novelists, gave it as his opinion that among disappearing authors must be included Charles Kingsley, Charles Reade, Charles Lever, and Anthony Trollope. This statement must not be allowed to pass unchallenged. Kingsley may go, perhaps, for he never reached the first rank, and what success fell to his share was for good rather than for distinctive work. But Reade must endure by virtue of the great historical romance, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, and the delightful, pathetic *Christie Johnstone*; and it is inconceivable that the world will be content to let die the rollicking, madcap stories of *Harry Lorrequer*. These writers were fully appreciated during their lifetime—indeed, in the case of some of their books they may have been overpraised—and the adverse criticism to which they are subjected to-day may, perhaps, be attributed to the apparently inevitable reaction. Every writer has his ups and downs in the estimation of the generations immediately succeeding his own; but of all the mighty none have fallen so low as Anthony Trollope. His has been the worst fate that can befall a writer: he has

Photo. Elliott & Fry.

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

not been abused: he has been ignored; and he is not disappearing: he has disappeared; and reaction alone cannot satisfactorily account for the lowly position he occupies to-day, with few so poor as to do him reverence. So entirely have his books gone out of fashion that, in this age of reprints when an attempt is made to galvanise into life the works of Mrs. Aphra Behn and Mr. R. M. Bird, it is impossible to obtain a set of his best books. Trollope's most ardent admirers would not ask, nor could they desire, a complete edition of his writings. His books of travel, *The West Indies, North America, Australia and New Zealand*, and *South Africa*, may be allowed to sink into oblivion; and with them may go the monograph on Cicero, and that work to which Dean Merivale referred as 'your comic Cæsar.' It is as a novelist Trollope has come down to us, and it is as a novelist he will live for posterity.

He wrote much, far too much; and many, nay, the majority, of his stories may be put aside. His industry was prodigious, and in quantity he rivalled another author who to-day also does not receive his full meed of praise—Bulwer Lytton. 'I feel confident,' Trollope said, speaking of the years 1859 to 1871, 'that in amount no other writer contributed so much during that time to English Literature.' The truth of his remark cannot be gainsaid; and the output is the more remarkable insomuch as during this period he was a busy Civil Servant. The secret

of his prolixity is that he never waited for the spirit to move him. The mere word 'inspiration' aroused his ire; and for the men who could only work when 'inspired' his contempt was boundless.

'To me it would not be more absurd if the shoe-maker were to wait for inspiration, or the tallow-chandler for the divine moment of melting,' he declared. 'If the man whose business it is to write has eaten too many good things, or has drunk too much, or has smoked too many cigars,—as men who write will sometimes do,—then his condition may be unfavourable for work; but so will be the condition of a shoe-maker who has been similarly imprudent. I have sometimes thought that the inspiration wanted has been the remedy which time will give to the evil results of such imprudence.—*Mens sana in corpore sano.* The author wants that as does every other workman,—that and a habit of industry. I was once told that the surest aid to the writing of a book was a piece of cobbler's wax on my chair. I certainly believe in the cobbler's wax much more than in the inspiration.'

Undoubtedly Trollope adhered to the cobbler's wax theory all the days of his life. He found he could write as well when he was travelling as when seated at his desk—the proof of this is to be found in the merits of *Barchester Towers*, written almost entirely in railway carriages. For many years, while in the postal service, he rose at half-past five and worked until half-past eight, writing two hundred and fifty words every quarter of an hour; and he found the words came as regularly as his watch went. It is unlikely he would have done better work if he had not laboured so methodically, but it is probable

he would not have turned out so many mediocre works.

Perhaps the temporary eclipse of Trollope is due largely to his *Autobiography*. 'I confess,' he said therein in a characteristic passage, 'that my first object in taking to literature as a profession was that which is common to the barrister when he goes to the bar, and to the baker when he sets up his oven. I wished to make an income on which I and those belonging to me might live in comfort.' Nothing could be more laudable! He prided himself upon being a tradesman, ready and willing to work to order. Again and again he declared ostentatiously that he wrote only for money, that he found his reward in the publisher's cheque, and that he attributed to the pecuniary result of his labours all the importance he felt them to have at the time. The *Autobiography* bristles with figures. In 1847 he published his first book, *The MacDermotts of Ballycloran*, on the half-profits system, 'and I can with truth declare that I expected nothing,' he has recorded, 'and I got nothing.' In the following year Colburn brought out *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*. The terms were the same, and so was the result. The former was still-born; the latter sold to the extent of 140 of the 375 copies printed. These stories of Irish life failing to attract, in 1850 he published an historical romance, *La Vendée*, for which on delivery of the manuscript he received £20 on

account of future profits. It was not until five years later that *The Warden* appeared. For this he received £20, 3s. 9d. But *The Warden*, though its pecuniary success was infinitesimal, attracted attention in the press, and the author began to be regarded as one with whom it might be necessary to reckon. Even the publishers were impressed, and Longmans offered to print the next novel and to pay in advance £100. This was *Barchester Towers*. During twenty years these two books, the first of the Barset series, brought the author £727, 11s. 3d. *The Three Clerks* followed, Bentley buying the copyright for £250.

Thus encouraged, Trollope demanded £400 for *Doctor Thorne*. Bentley would not give more than £300, so the author, who was leaving England the next day, went to Chapman and Hall. 'I said what I had to say to Mr. Edward Chapman in a quick torrent of words. Looking at me as he might have done at a highway robber who had stopped him on Hounslow Heath, he said he supposed he might do as I desired. I considered this to be a sale, and it was a sale. I remember that he held the poker in his hand all the time I was with him; but, in truth, even if he had declined to buy the book there would have been no danger.' *The Bertrams* went to the same firm for the same sum; and, in the meantime his first book of travels having proved a success, he demanded £600 for an Irish novel as yet unwritten, *Castle*

Richmond. *Framley Parsonage* was commissioned for *The Cornhill Magazine* for £1000; and after this he received £600 for a one-volume novel, or £3000 for a story running to twenty parts. Sometimes he received more—once at least he was given £3525. For many years he contrived to keep up his price, and, though in his later days he was compelled to accept considerably less, it is wonderful, remembering his enormous output, he should have been able to sustain it so long. Including £7000 made by journalism—political, critical, and sporting articles—he earned £70,000, which result he looked upon as 'comfortable, but not splendid.' Considering his popularity, it was certainly not magnificent. Literature was then the worst paid profession. Think what a doctor or a barrister of similar eminence would have made! To-day, thanks partly to the American copyright law, a popular writer may amass a modest competence with one book.

Now, all authors write for money; but, if they are worth their salt, they take pleasure in their work. Despite the unfortunate *Autobiography*, it is probable Trollope did not differ greatly from his fellow-workers. Certainly his desire for money did not induce him deliberately to lower the standard of his work; and, though he may not have realised it, he loved the pen, for surely no one, not urged by want of pence, could otherwise have worked so hard as he. He was proud of his books, and believed that some at least might

live; while his affection for his characters was profound. The public naturally has not gone below the surface; and it has accepted Trollope's statements without reservation. It will not willingly think, however, of the man of letters as a tradesman, turning out his wares with one eye on his paper and the other on his banking account. It likes to think of him as imbued with romance: it will not place the writing of books on the same plane as the making of buttons or the baking of bricks; and it is disgusted to learn that one of its favourites wrote so many words in so many minutes. It distinguishes, as Trollope would not, between the work of the brain and the work of the hand.

It has already been said that *The Warden* was the first book in which Trollope did himself justice. Within the next few years he issued *Barchester Towers*, *Doctor Thorne*, *Framley Parsonage*, and *The Last Chronicles of Barset*. These are the Barset series of novels, and undoubtedly they comprise his best work. During this period appeared also *The Small House at Allington*—'I do not think I have ever done better work,' said Trollope; *The Three Clerks* and *Orley Farm*; and later *Can You Forgive Her? Phineas Finn*, *Phineas Redux*, and *The Prime Minister*, in all of which is a semi-political atmosphere. The student of English literature may be content with these, though perhaps *The Eustace Diamonds* might repay perusal. These are the books

upon which his fame depends, and a very sound basis it is upon which to rest a reputation.

Trollope's most enduring title to rank with the greater novelists is as the chronicler of Barsetshire.

'There is a county in the west of England, not so full of life, indeed, nor so widely spoken of as some of its manufacturing leviathan brethren in the north, but which is, nevertheless, very dear to those who know it well,' so Trollope described it. 'Its green pastures, its waving wheat, its deep and shady and—let us add—dirty lanes, its paths and stiles, its tawny-coloured, well-built rural churches, its avenues of beeches, and frequent Tudor mansions, its constant county hunts, its social graces, and the general air of clanship which pervades it, has made it to its own inhabitants a favoured land of Goshen. It is purely agricultural; agricultural in its produce, agricultural in its poor, and agricultural in its pleasures. There are towns in it, of course; depots from whence are brought seeds and groceries, ribbons and fire-shovels; in which markets are held and county balls are carried on; which return members to parliament, generally—in spite of the reform bills, past, present, and coming—in accordance with the dictates of some neighbouring land magnate: from whence emanate the local postmen, and where is located the supply of post-horses necessary for county visiting. But these towns add nothing to the importance of the county; they consist, with the exception of the assize-town, of dull, all but death-like single streets. Each possesses two pumps, three hotels, ten shops, fifteen beer-houses, a beadle, and a market-place. Indeed the town population of the county reckons for nothing when the importance of the county is discussed, with the exception, as before said, of the assize-town, which is also a cathedral city. Herein is a clerical aristocracy, which is certainly not without its due weight. A resident bishop,

a resident dean, an archdeacon, three or four resident prebendaries, and all their numerous chaplains, vicars, and ecclesiastical satellites, do make up a society sufficiently powerful to be counted as something by the county squirearchy. In other respects the greatness of Barsetshire depends wholly on its landed powers.'

Trollope conceived the first of the Barsetshire tales, *The Warden*, whilst wandering one summer evening round the purlieus of Salisbury Cathedral. The new shire he added to the English counties was very real to him, he had it all in his mind—its roads and railroads, its towns and parishes, its members of parliament, its different hunts, its great lords and their castles, its squires and their parks, its rectors and their churches. When writing *Framley Parsonage* he made a map of the county; and he declared that 'there has been no name given to a fictitious site which does not represent to me a spot of which I know all the accessories, as though I had lived and wandered there.' Alone of the working population he had nothing to say; not of the village shopkeepers; nor, though he insisted on the fact that Barsetshire was entirely agricultural, of the farmer and his labourers. On the one side he saw Gatherum Castle, where lived the Duke of Omnium in almost feudal state, and the great county families; on the other, the professional men, the doctors, clergymen, and attorneys.

When he invented Barsetshire he limited his out-

look to the cathedral city; and in his famous trilogy, *The Warden, Barchester Towers,* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset,* he confined himself mainly to the exposition of the humours of clerical life. These ecclesiastical novels introduce all the dignitaries of the church: bishops, deans, archdeacons, canons, prebendaries, precentors, vicars, curates, chaplains. He wrote of their respectable humdrum lives; of their little squabbles, their ambitions, hopes and disappointments, failures and successes. If at times he was severe, at least he was fair; and he gave us no theatrical figures of ranting parsons and red-nosed, over-fed rectors. Satire he sometimes allowed himself, but caricature never; and if Precentor Harding was the best, the Bishop's chaplain, Slope, was the worst.

He was agreeably surprised to find he could write so well about clergymen. He has related proudly how he was often asked in what period of his early life he had lived so long in a cathedral city as to have became intimate with the ways of a Close. As a matter of fact he had never resided for any length of time in any cathedral city except the metropolis, and he was not closely acquainted with any clergyman. 'My archdeacon (Grantly), who has been said to be life-like, was the simple result of an effort of my moral consciousness. It was such as that, in my opinion, that an archdeacon should be,—or, at any rate, would be with such advantages as an arch-

deacon might have been; and lo! an archdeacon was produced, who has been declared by competent authorities to be an archdeacon to the very ground.' The accuracy of his ecclesiastical figures has never been called into question. He wrote of them as easily, and with an instinct as true, as young Benjamin Disraeli wrote of dukes.

What action there is in the trilogy, and it is but little, takes place in the quiet ancient Close of Barchester Cathedral. But, as compensation, there is a great gallery of portraits. The gentle Bishop Grantly is reverently portrayed, and contrasted admirably with his son, the Archdeacon, energetic and overbearing. In *The Warden* the latter is unsympathetic; but further acquaintance in the next book renders him more acceptable; and when he is opposed to the crafty Slope his very faults become virtues—and even at his worst the Archdeacon is a gentleman. The henpecked Bishop Proudie is a poor creature, under the thumb of his wife, who recalls inevitably the Mrs. Caudle of the Curtain Lectures. Trollope loved to introduce the characters of one book into the others, and the reader may meet in many a volume with the Duke of Omnium and his managing man Fothergill, the De Courcys, Doctor Thorne, Miss Dunstable, and the Proudies among a host of others. The author only killed Mrs. Proudie after overhearing a conversation between two clergymen at the Athenæum Club, who, discussing his books and especially

this character, remarked that they would not write novels at all unless they could invent new figures. Then Trollope went home, a sad man, and straightway killed the Bishop's wife; but he regretted her to the end of his days.

Trollope rarely indulged in the luxury of any but the very slightest plot. *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers* have but the merest thread of story, and digressions are frequent. In the former is dragged in a somewhat ill-natured parody of Carlyle, who is rechristened Anticant; a reference to a well-known novelist, who figures as Mr. Popular Sentiment; and many pages are devoted to a disquisition upon the influence of the press, which would be more in place in an essay; while in the latter the description of the sports at Ullathorne and the desires of the Lookalofts to take precedence of the Greenacres are amusing enough, but they irritate because they needlessly stop the progress of the tale. In *Doctor Thorne* he overcame this fault. He had a more concise tale to unfold—it was suggested by his brother Adolphus—and with the exception of the Duke of Omnium's dinner-party there is no ground for such a complaint; which may account for the fact that, in his lifetime at least, this was the most popular of his stories. Indeed, with *Doctor Thorne* Trollope also broadened his canvas, and added to the scenes of clerical life the humours of county society.

But if Trollope rarely had a plot, he often had a

purpose. 'I have ever thought of myself as a preacher of sermons, and my pulpit as one which I could make both salutary and agreeable to my audience.' He realised that it was the first duty of the novelist to be readable, and he never allowed his sermon to interfere with the story. The strongest theme he ever employed is in *The Vicar of Bullington*, in which he introduced a girl to whom he refers—to save ears polite—as a castaway. How is the woman to return to decency to whom no decent door is opened? is the problem he put before his readers. He held that what was sauce for the gander should be sauce for the goose, in so far at least that while the fatted calf is killed for the prodigal son, pardon should not be withheld from the erring daughter. In *The Way We Live Now* he tilted against commercial profligacy; and having taken in hand the satirist's whip he turned it against girls who sink their self-respect in their eagerness to secure husbands, young men who are too selfish to abate a single luxury for the sake of matrimony, and against the puffing propensities of authors. Elsewhere he had a word to say of mothers who would not nurse their children, of the bribery laws, of clerical sinecures and pluralism, and of competitive examinations for the Civil Service, and he indulged in quiet raillery when he raised the question of doctors' etiquette. But he was no satirist. His method lacked delicacy: he used the bludgeon instead of the scalpel. He was

at his best when exposing the shams of society, and castigating arrogance, undue pride of race, and snobbishness generally, which he did as fervently, though not so humorously, as Thackeray. He endeavoured to make vice repellent and virtue attractive, and to secure the reader's affection for the good, the beautiful, and the true.

Trollope never troubled about novel situations or dramatic effects. As often as not there is no *dénouement*; and he was quite indifferent to the advantage that might accrue from the preservation of some ignorance as to the ending of the tale. If a book was not good enough to be independent of mystery, which could always be solved by a glance at the last chapter, why then it was worthless. The result of this feeling caused him to interrupt the narrative to assure the reader that all would be well in the end, and that the heroine would not marry A the fortune-hunter, or B the unworthy, but C, who was her affinity. This naturally weakened the interest that otherwise might be felt in the lady's affairs. But Trollope was, perhaps, never entirely at his ease with his lovers. In *The Warden*, where the love interest is between Bold the reformer and Eleanor Harding, the figures are not very real; and in *Barchester Towers*, where Eleanor reappears as a widow, it is not easy to be very anxious about her admirers. The affairs of sweet Mary Thorne and Frank Gresham and of Lord Lufton

and Lucy Robarts are, however, a marked improvement.

Trollope did not take for his province the matters of life and death. He was pre-eminently a chronicler of small-beer, and at his best when dealing with such trifles as the appointment to a deanery or a wardenship, and the consequent intrigues. His humour found its most pleasing field when describing such scenes as those which constitute the duel between Mrs. Proudie and the crafty Slope for the control of the Bishop. His favourite devices were the pursuit of an heiress by impecunious admirers and the courtship of a maid of (comparatively) low degree by the Squire or the Lord of the Manor. These he introduced into more than one story.

For the most part his characters are of flesh and blood. He presents neither devils nor saints; and if he had a weakness for heroines, on the other hand his heroes were rather poor creatures. His bad men were Slope, Henry Thorne, Sir Roger Scatcherd and his son, Louis Philippe. It cannot be said that he was as successful with his good young men, for they were as unstable as water; and their hearts were so little under control that they flitted from girl to girl, even after they had to all intents and purposes plighted their troth. His girls were better drawn: Lucy Robarts, Kate Woodward, and Mary Thorne, charming creatures all. Excellent, too, is the stately, statuesque Griselda Grantly, who, when she hears from

her mother that at the eleventh hour her marriage may be broken off, remarks placidly, 'Then, Mamma, I had better give them orders not to go on with the marking.' He was happier still with his older men. Archdeacon Grantly has already been mentioned; and Harding, whom Trollope presented confidently to the reader, 'not as a hero, not as a man to be admired and talked of, not as a man who should be toasted at public dinners and spoken of with conventional absurdity as a perfect divine, but as a good man without guile, believing humbly in the religion which he has striven to teach, and guided by the precept which he has striven to learn.' A fine fellow Harding and a credit to his cloth. Admirable, too, was Doctor Thorne, with his loving, trusty heart and almost womanly tenderness; but somehow it seems wrong to have married him to Miss Dunstable. But then Trollope wanted everybody to be happy at the end of the last chapter of the last volume.

The author's favourite was undoubtedly Plantagenet Palliser: 'If he be not a perfect gentleman, then am I unable to describe a gentleman.' Plantagenet is all that is claimed for him; but the greatest character in all the books is the Rev. Mr. Crawley. Crawley, Vicar of Hogglestock, strict, stern, and unpleasant, ranks with the greatest creations of modern fiction. This unhappy clergyman, whose pride prevents him, owing to his poverty, from associating with his equals, is anxious only to hide from the world the

barrenness of his household. At last, when his wife falls ill, he is compelled to allow the aid of his friends; and at the end when his pride is conquered, and he thanks Lucy Robarts for all she has done, he seems to reach the height of some great patriarchal figure of old.

'May God Almighty bless you, Miss Robarts. You have brought sunshine into this house, even in the time of sickness when there was no sunshine; and He will bless you. You have been the Good Samaritan, binding up the wounds of the afflicted, pouring in oil and balm. To the mother of my children you have given life, and to me you have brought light, and comfort, and good words,—making my spirit glad within me as it has not been gladdened before. All this hath come of charity, which vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up. Faith and hope are beautiful, but charity exceedeth them all.'

And, having so spoken, instead of leading her to the carriage, he went away and hid himself. There is nothing finer in Trollope, and perhaps nothing better in English fiction.

Also Trollope excelled in the presentation of what in theatrical parlance are styled 'character parts', such as the Countess de Courcy, Lady Arabella Gresham, Lady Lufton, Miss Thorne of Ullathorne, Martha Dunstable, the 'Oil of Lebanon' heiress, and Lady Glencora. The latter ranked among the author's favourites. 'She is by no means a perfect lady; but if she be not all over a woman, then am I not able to describe a woman.' In this category come, too,

Mrs. Proudie and Madeleine Neroni; but the portrait of the latter, an unscrupulous coquette, was by no means a success.

What Trollope said of *Barchester Towers* may be said of most of his books. 'The story was thoroughly English. There was a little fox-hunting and a little tuft-hunting, some Christian virtue and some Christian cant. There was no heroism and no villainy. There was much Church, but more love-making. And it was honest, downright love.' To this need only be added that sometimes there was a little electioneering.

Trollope had some pathos and a quiet humour that vented itself not so much in the dialogue as in the delineation of the characters. Nor did he lack tenderness, as all are aware who have read of Arabin's courting of Eleanor Bold.

'And now it remained to them each to enjoy the assurance of each other's love. And how great that luxury is! How far it surpasses any other pleasure which God has allowed to His creatures! And to a woman's heart how doubly delightful! When the ivy has found its tower, when the delicate creeper has found its strong wall, we know how the parasite plants grow and prosper. They were not created to stretch forth their branches alone, and endure without protection the summer's sun and the winter's storm. Alone they but spread themselves on the ground, and cower unseen in the dingy shade. But when they have found their firm supporters, how wonderful is their beauty; how all-pervading and victorious! What is the turret without its ivy, or its high garden wall without its jasmine, which gives it beauty and fragrance? The hedge without the honey-

suckle is but a hedge. There is a feeling still half existing, but now half conquered by the force of human nature, that a woman should be ashamed of her love till the husband's right to her compels her to acknowledge it. We would fain preach a different doctrine. A woman should glory in her love; but on that account let her take the more care that it be such as to justify her glory.'

Trollope wrote easily and without strain, as the preceding extract shows clearly enough. But his style was generally undistinguished. There are no purple patches, no fine passages of description. There is no scene which the reader is impelled to re-read again and again. He was no phrase-maker, and epigrams are few and far between; but occasionally a page is lit up with a flash of Disraelian wit. We read of the Duke of Omnium, who 'was very willing that the queen should be queen so long as he was allowed to be the Duke of Omnium'; and of the Hon. George de Courcy, who 'for his part liked to see the people go quiet on Sundays. The parsons had only one day in seven, and he thought they were fully entitled to that.'

Trollope's best books are veritable human documents, and his scenes are as true to life as are his characters. His peers, his county families, squires, political folk, clergymen, doctors, attorneys, civil servants, are so many accurate portraits of the men and women of the time. Within his limits he did excellent work; and the fact that he was for many years prior to his death the most popular of English

writers of fiction is a tribute alike to his powers and to the public which had the discernment to recognise them. He must for ever rank high among the exponents of English county life in mid-Victorian times; and the day cannot be far distant when he will take his place, not perhaps with the greatest English novelists, but certainly not far below them.

G. J. WHYTE-MELVILLE

LITERATURE is a catholic calling, and welcomes adherents to its standard from all sources. It is, in its very essence, democratic, and the highest honours may be won by peer or peasant. Culture is essential: lacking that, the aspirant has not the remotest chance of promotion. Not favour, nor influence, nor wealth, nor birth, can help a man for any length of time. It may secure a more favourable hearing and a wider audience for his first book; but, should this be a failure, not all the king's horses, nor all the king's men, can advance the author a step.

It does not often happen that the ranks of the army of letters are recruited from the professions. The professional man who is ambitious naturally endeavours to make his way in his chosen sphere, and has but little time to devote to the active pursuit of literature; while he who is unambitious in his own line as a rule has no desire to shine in another. The life led by a guardsman, for instance, does not usually incline him to take up his pen, save perhaps to write on those technical subjects which it is his duty, if not always his pleasure, to master. He generally prefers open-air sports to the seclusion of

his study, and would rather read the works of fiction provided by other brains than exert his powers of imagination to entertain his fellow-creatures; yet, even among soldiers, there have been exceptions, and the most prominent soldier-poet and soldier-novelist is George John Whyte-Melville.

Whyte-Melville was born in 1821, the scion of a famous Scottish family. He went to Eton when Keate was headmaster; and left the college, at the age of eighteen, to join the 93rd Highlanders. Subsequently he exchanged into the Coldstream Guards, and in 1849 retired with the rank of captain. While in the army he had written some agreeable verse, and he afterwards began to spend some portion of his leisure in the composition of works of fiction. He published *Captain Digby: an Autobiography* in 1853, and in the following year *General Bounce*. When war was declared against Russia he volunteered for active service, and, being appointed a major of Turkish irregular cavalry, remained in the Crimea until peace was signed. Then he returned to England, and settled down in the country to devote himself to literature as a profession and to field-sports as a recreation. Perhaps the recreation ranked in his mind as more important than his profession; and certainly in his day his reputation as a sportsman was higher than that as an author. This perhaps may partly be explained by the fact that as he was never a poor man—though no doubt the income he

derived from his books was welcome—and was not compelled to write for a living, he was regarded by his fellow-scribes as a *dilettante*, and partly because he very obviously preferred the company of soldiers and sportsmen to that of his brother-authors. It has been suggested that if he had moved in literary circles the merits of his books would have been more readily impressed upon the world in general; and probably this would have been the case. But, from the first, he appealed to readers of his own class, and his books have since been steadily making their way into the favour of the general reader.

Whyte-Melville, one of the few novelists born in the purple, possessed the inestimable advantage of writing at first-hand about fashionable, military, and sporting society, and as a natural result he never fell into the pits that beset the man whose acquaintance with these circles has been derived only from books. He was at home when writing of society in London, of life in country-houses, of the hunt—a land unknown to the general reader.

He wrote songs and verses and historical romances, and purely social tales, but he was at his best when writing sporting novels, such as *Market Harborough*. In the latter he was able to turn to good account his knowledge of hunting centres and hunting society. Descriptions abound of hunt-breakfasts, meets, good runs and races of all sorts, from welter to steeple-chase; while a whole gallery of portraits of gentleman-

riders, jockeys, grooms, trainers, stable-boys, dealers could be culled from his works. A famous authority upon fox-hunting and a man who rode straight to hounds, it might be said of him in the words of the old Cheshire song he loved to quote :

> 'To whom naught comes amiss,
> One horse or another, that country or this ;
> Who through falls and bad starts undauntedly still
> Rode up to the motto—*Be with them I will !*'

He admired bold riding, and it was his delight to chronicle a good run. Such enthusiasm is infectious, and surely there are few readers whose blood does not course more quickly through their veins after reading the account of a '*real* fast thing.' Who, for instance, reading, has not enjoyed the narrative of Mr. Sawyer's first ride in High Leicestershire, galloping over grass fields to covert with, or rather after, the Honourable Crasher ?

Whyte-Melville's books are not remarkable for plot. *Market Harborough* is simply a series of hunting episodes strung round Mr. Sawyer, who, disappointed in love—that is to say, he had proposed to Miss Mexico, the possessor of thirty thousand pounds, and had been rejected—and bored in the 'Old Country,' determined to have a turn in the Shires. Yet there is not a dull page in it. The love interest is of the slightest. Parson Dove's daughter, Cissy, likes Sawyer, and, when she learns he has 'a place in the country,' gives him all the encouragement

that even he, who wants a good deal of bringing on, can desire. The rest of the book deals with the hunt and its followers; and here, as it has already been remarked, the author was in his element, for the hunting-field was the breath of life to him. The surprise of *Market Harborough* for readers unfamiliar with its author's works is the superb characterisation. The contrast between the two horse-dealers is excellent. Sloper, the country bred, who sells Hotspur to Mr. Sawyer; and Varnish, the town-bred, whom Mr. Sawyer mistakes for an aristocrat, and who also contrives to sell him a horse: the only thing in common between the two men is that each contrives to get rid of inferior wares at very remunerative prices.

But it is not only the dealers who sell horses. Every one in High Leicestershire and other hunting centres is anxious to dispose of animals whose blemishes they have discovered. Sawyer who, thanks to Isaac, contrives to get rid of Marathon, a bad-tempered brute, at a good round figure; Mr. Savage, Captain Struggle, Major Brush, all have a nag with more or fewer defects to sell; the sporting Parson Dove is not unwilling to part, even to a prospective son-in-law, with a hunter that does not carry him well; only the Honourable Crasher, a well-to-do man with languid manners, dissipated looks, and immense courage and daring in the saddle—a gentleman from the tips of his well-made boots to the top of his well-

brushed hair—is free from this failing of his neighbours. Isaac, the old family retainer of Mr. Sawyer, gardener, man-of-all-work, groom, who contrasts well with Tiptop, the stud-groom of the Honourable Crasher, contrives by a smart trick to persuade the latter to advise his master to purchase Marathon from Mr. Sawyer. The manner in which Isaac outwits Tiptop is so scandalous that, were it discovered, it would be followed by criminal proceedings anywhere but among the hunting fraternity. There, not only all's fair in love and war, but all's fair also when dealing with horses. The sportsman who is tricked either feels no malice or carefully hides his feelings. Apparently it is recognised that you must exercise what judgment you possess and stand by the result. If you are outwitted, for the sake of your reputation you must remain a silent sufferer. Besides, there is strong inducement to hold your tongue; if you talk of your mistake you will certainly never be able to sell the horse to a friend! A good story is told of a man whose horse went lame. A veterinary surgeon was called in, examined the animal, and said it was afflicted with an incurable navicular disease. 'What had I better do?' the owner asked. 'Well, sir,' his groom remarked, '*conscientiously speaking*, I should part with him to another gentleman.' The hunting men, as depicted by Whyte-Melville, are a happy-go-lucky set, good-hearted and open-handed. Sawyer, who knew no one when he arrived at Market

Harborough, a few days later was in the swim. Enthusiasm is the open sesame to the circle; all else that is demanded is courage, a good seat, a cool head, and some amiability.

Sometimes, however, Whyte-Melville constructed a plot with great care; but in these cases the stories verge perilously on the melodramatic. An example is *The Brookes of Bridlemere.* The tale is wound round Walter Brooke, an extravagant man in an expensive regiment, whose expenditure always exceeded his allowance, and who, when he met with losses on the turf or at the card-table, invariably found himself in a tight place. On one occasion he lost a large sum and induced a brother-officer, Ragman de Rolle, to 'climb up behind' a bill for three hundred pounds. This, however, did not clear his liabilities, and Walter was at his wit's end until he conceived the brilliant idea to write to his friend and say that the original bill was insufficiently stamped and therefore valueless—would he please endorse another. But though Walter said he had destroyed the first bill, he had not done so. His little game was to discount them both. Of course he did not intend to commit a fraud on his friend, of course he had merely adopted this *ruse* for the sake of temporary convenience, of course he intended to take up both bills when they became due—and, equally of course, when the time came he was unable to meet them. The bills had been discounted by a

society money-lender, Multiple, the scoundrel of the book, as Walter is the scamp. Multiple suspected there was something wrong, and, as the price of his silence, he forced Walter to admit him as an intimate to Bridlemere. There he met Helen, the daughter of the house, and eventually Helen, though loving Philip Storey, consented to marry him as the price of her brother's wrong-doing.

One knows instinctively, however, that the engagement between them will fall through, and that, in the last chapter, Helen will marry the man of her choice. The plot centres round the efforts of Walter to pay the first bill, so that the fraud may not become known to de Rolle. Offers were made for its repurchase by Jack Brooke, but Multiple would not sell. It was a useful weapon in his social campaign. Multiple eventually lost the day, for when another of Walter's relatives, to save the family's honour, offered a blank cheque, de Rolle, from whom the secret could no longer be kept, intervened, and, like the good fellow he was, suggested that all concerned were making a great pother about nothing, since he had endorsed two bills each for three hundred pounds—he did not say how the second signature was obtained.

This, according to all the recognised canons, is a better tale than *Market Harborough*, yet the reader feels instinctively that it is not so good. There is just that indefinable something that separates good

work from the best. *The Brookes of Bridlemere* has an orthodox beginning, orthodox plot, orthodox conclusion: *Market Harborough* is formless, devoid of incident. Yet the latter contains the *je ne sais quoi* that makes all the difference. Perhaps *Market Harborough* came straight from the man's heart, and the other was written because a novel was expected Withal, *The Brookes of Bridlemere* must cause envy to many a novelist of to-day whose merit is acknowledged. The tale is unfolded upon a large canvas, a considerable number of characters are introduced, the social spheres range from that of the duke to that of the poacher. There is insight into the life of soldiers in barracks, and also home life, which, if the glimpse of Parson Dove and his wife and daughter be excepted, is conspicuously absent in *Market Harborough.* The author takes 'the county' of Middlesworth for his background. He shows the aristocrats, the county folk, the manufacturers, and the peasants. He takes the reader into mansions and cottages, unfolds the relations existing between the lord of the manor, his tenants and dependants. At the county balls he exposes the jealousies and the rivalries of the various *cliques.* He goes out with the guns, follows the hounds, winds up an evening at the regimental mess of the Loyal Dancing Hussars, and the next morning, by way of change, introduces us to the offices of a firm of sharp-practice money-lenders.

The 'county' is admirably described. The families,

typical of those to be found in every country, are taken, and each member of each family is carefully portrayed. The Waywardens are the aristocrats—members of the great world of London, and by virtue of that and of their holding in the shire, the natural leaders of Middlesworth society: Lord Waywarden, who could never in any attire or under any circumstances be taken for anything but a gentleman, a practical agriculturalist, fond of farming, devoting thought to his bullocks and sheep and draining and top-dressing until his nine o'clock breakfast; for the rest of the day, the courtly, agreeable nobleman; Lady Waywarden, who had been a beauty in days when men admired beauty more than they do now, without much heart, yet far from unwilling to do a kindness; Lady Julia, beautiful, a little fast, fond of gaiety, and rather a flirt, well-bred, of course, brilliant, amusing, with plenty of common-sense, and a good, sound heart beneath a somewhat frivolous manner. At the other extreme of the social hierarchy the Storeys, the well-known brewers of Middlesworth. Mrs. Storey, a stout, untidy, motherly sort of woman, with a fine figure run to seed, loved by the poor, regarded by the tradesmen as 'stuck up,' and more or less ignored by her social superiors; George, her husband, a subdued, plodding man, who worked at his business because it was his duty, but who could not enjoy the labour. Almost a dreamer, he was cut out for a student, and he felt himself out of his depths

in the commercial war he was compelled to wage against his rivals. Philip, pure-bred Anglo-Saxon, fond of sport, no hero, but a man good to rely upon, to look at, and to be with. A pleasant, good, all-round fellow, 'was a little inclined to Liberalism in politics, and intolerance in religion, believed *The Times*, shaved scrupulously, drank port wine, and hated a lie.' Situated socially somewhere between these two families were the Brookes of Bridlemere. The Squire, who had been a stalwart man in his prime, a good horseman, a good shot, and a more or less capable magistrate and speaker at public gatherings of the landed interest, was now a middle-aged, querulous man, rapidly breaking up, already powerless below the waist. 'One doctor called it rheumatism; another suppressed gout; a third thought his liver was affected; a fourth considered the general system too low. Nobody sent for a strange practitioner, lest he should blurt out the right name and declare it paralysis.' Jack, the elder son, practical farmer, loved order, method, and liberal economy, yet whatever belonged to him was at the service of every one who wanted it. Walter, the younger son, has already been mentioned. It may be added he was the most admired, though by no means the best-beloved man in the regiment; 'quite the hussar' in girls' eyes; more popular with the officers than with his men, for, as the author says truly, his inferiors are nicer judges of a gentleman than his equals. Helen,

the daughter, not very popular, shy, stately, haughty, yet womanly, with tender, loving heart. Sir Archibald, the Squire's brother, soldier, traveller, a man of the world, without vices, as tender and affectionate as Helen. There is no doubt that Sir Archibald shared with Philip Storey the author's favour as a typical Englishman, brave, unselfish, loyal.

Considerable space has been devoted to the analysis of *Market Harborough* and *The Brookes of Bridlemere* because they are the books most typical of the author. All his other novels, with the exception of the historical romances (which call for no special remark), resemble one or other of these stories, and most of the characters in his other works are merely variants upon those already introduced. Fresh portraits are, however, from time to time, added to the gallery. *Satanella* especially contains the portrayal of other folk—Blanche Douglas, beautiful, passionate, deeply in love with John ('Daisy') Walters, who yet lures the General St. Joseph, most self-depreciating kindly, courteous, bravest of soldiers—he might be a blood relation of Colonel Newcome. 'Daisy,' who when, by all the rules of fiction, he should have been thinking of the heroine, only thought how to put her on 'a good thing' at the races. Calm, so far as she was concerned, he fell in love with a fresh, unsophisticated young Irish girl. The narrative of this beautiful love-affair is the gem of the book. *Black but Comely* contains admirable descriptions of gipsy

folk and of the habits of such people, but as a story it is spoilt by a too reckless use of coincidence.

Whyte-Melville loved to portray good women and stout-hearted, chivalrous men, and he wrote of children with tenderness and understanding, and of animals with an affection only equalled by that of 'Ouida.' He grew enthusiastic at the mere thought of noble, generous actions. His heart went out to Mrs. Storey when, after her husband's brewery is burnt down, she shows no sign of grief or despair, but comforts her husband so skilfully that at last he comes to think if Bertha does not believe all is lost, why there may still be a chance to retrieve his fortunes; and to Miss Prince, the governess, who is anxious to place her hoard in the hands of her old ruined schoolfellow; and he loves to dwell upon the picture of little Dot Storey sliding from papa's lap to go to Uncle Phil, suspecting there was something wrong, neither springing to his knee as usual, nor making playful, painful plunges at his whiskers.

He could be epigrammatic, as when he stated 'to judge from his own account, no man ever misses a meet save by a concatenation of circumstances totally unprecedented.' Humour, too, he had in plenty, and many a sly aside is to be found in his books, and often an amusing situation, as when in *Black but Comely* Mervyn Strange determines not to fall in love with Jane Lee, or as when in *The Brookes of Bridlemere* Lady Julia unexpectedly wishes to purchase a

dog in Rotten Row. Lady Julia's rings and bracelets may have been worth eighty pounds, but she had not the necessary five pounds in cash. The purse of her companion, the Duchess of Merthyr-Tydvil, contained only eighteenpence, as the Duke had borrowed all her surplus of silver to pay for his boat on the Serpentine. The Duke had not a farthing. Lord Mexico, one of the richest men in England, could only find seven-and-sixpence in his pockets. Lady Julia was in despair, when fortunately, at the critical moment, appeared young Overdue, 'an ornament to Her Majesty's Household Brigade, with an allowance of two hundred per annum and the tastes, accompanied by the liabilities, of a millionaire.' He promptly pulled out a roll of bank-notes, and Lady Julia was enabled to make her purchase. The scene is admirably depicted.

Whyte-Melville wrote pleasantly and agreeably, and, it seems, without effort. Yet he could always rise to the height he desired, and when he chose he was able to write really beautiful prose. He was at his best in the following description of the Emir's review :—

'Soon the ten thousand horsemen formed in their respective tribes, and a chosen troop from each curveted into a smooth, green space before the Emir, and drew up in imposing bands. Then a chief, on a chestnut stallion, thick and muscular, like one of the Elgin marbles, dashed out into the midst, and reined short up, man and horse quivering all over with suppressed energy and fire. Another, wheeling round him at

a gallop, cast an unerring spear within a hand's breadth of his turban, and the chestnut horse, springing to speed at a bound, dashed off in hot pursuit. A dozen strides, and he had caught his enemy; the lance was up to strike, and so like fierce earnest was this warrior's play, it seemed as if it must transfix the fugitive. But no, a turn of wrist, a touch of heel, the chestnut skimmed aside like a swallow on the wing, and swooped at another foe, fresh emerged from the opposing phalanx. Another and another shot out to swell the game, and then a dozen, and then a score, till the whole were engaged, and the eye saw nothing but one wild whirl of streaming mares, and glancing steel, and floating draperies, and flash of pistols through a cloud of dust; and here and there, above that dim confusion, the fragments of a shivered spear, shot high in the air.

'Then the dust rolled away, the skirmish subsided, chiefs were standing by panting steeds, stroking the pointed ears, and dripping, shining necks of their favourites; here a girth had been broken, there a warrior is rolled over, man and horse, on the sand, but beyond this, so skilful were the human, so well broken the animal performers that nothing resembling a casualty had occurred. Abd-el-kader bowed his head in dignified approval to the war-like Arab on the chestnut stallion, who galloped up to signify the conclusion of the sports by flinging down a broken lance at the Emir's feet. The play was over—the real drama was about to begin.'

It is not for his plots that Whyte-Melville is to be valued, but for his atmosphere and his characters. Shrewd comments on men and things he made in plenty. His philosophy was not very deep, perhaps, but it was thoroughly sound. Though he never wrote a novel with a purpose, he often inculcated a moral, always quite simple, such as, for instance, the earthen

pots and the iron pots cannot go downstream together very far, without damage to the former. Sometimes he preached his little sermon: 'Yes, it is always worth while to shoot a good shot! Stand up like a man, bend your bow, straighten your back, draw your arrow to the head, aim true and steady; whether you get an outer or an inner ring, a white, a gold, a bullseye, or miss the target altogether, do your level best, and never doubt but that, according to your intentions, not your merits, you will take a prize.' It may indeed be said of his books, as Captain Shandon said in the preface of the original *Pall Mall Gazette*, that they are written by a gentleman for gentlemen.

MRS. GASKELL

WHEN, to change the current of her thoughts after the death of her little son, Mrs. Gaskell took up her pen, it was only to be expected she would write a tale of mean streets, since, from childhood, she had sympathised with the trials of the poor of Manchester and had visited their homes, interested herself in their welfare, and endeavoured to alleviate their sorrows. Undaunted, Mrs. Gaskell went among the working folk in a day when it required courage to do so, as many, rendered desperate by their circumstances, were disinclined to distinguish between friends and foes in the upper classes. Men and women could always claim her sympathy; but her gentle heart went out to the underfed, overworked girls. Them she received at her home, always ready to listen to their troubles, advise, or teach the rudiments of education to such as could be persuaded to devote the time necessary for the acquisition of such elementary knowledge. To the end of her life she was always ready to assist, and when the great cotton famine of 1862 caused such endless misery, it was she who thought of the plan, afterwards

publicly adopted, of sewing-schools to give relief and employment to the women mill-hands.

The now famous study of the Labour Question, *Mary Barton*, issued in 1848, attracted immediate attention in literary circles, and Miss Edgeworth, Carlyle, and Landor wrote and spoke of it with enthusiasm, while Dickens gave practical proof of his appreciation by inviting the authoress to contribute to the forthcoming *Household Words*. In Manchester, of course, it was the topic of the hour, and practically all the readers in that city were divided into two camps: those who thought the book realistic, and those who regarded it as unfairly exaggerated. The employers of labour complained of the way in which they were portrayed in its pages; and it cannot be denied that they had a grievance, for the sympathies of the authoress were so obviously with the workmen. She looked at the social problem entirely from the point of view of the poor; and, while she did not omit to indicate the faults of the lower class, she could not bring herself to depict the merits of the other. It was heart against head with her, and at this time, if she saw life largely, she did not yet see it whole. The employers seemed well-to-do and happy, and she did not endeavour to penetrate beneath the surface. The *employés* were poor, discontented, uncertain of work, poorly paid; they had miserable lives and terrible dwellings. What wonder she wrote with bitterness? What wonder that the woman who

accompanied some real Barton and Wilson to the 'home' of the miserable Davenports lost, temporarily, the sense of proportion?

'They arrived in Berry Street. It was unpaved, and down the middle a gutter forced its way, every now and then forming pools in the holes with which the street abounded. Never was the old Edinburgh cry of *Gardez l'eau* more necessary than in this street. As they passed, women from their doors tossed household slops of every description into the gutter; they ran into the next pool, which overflowed and stagnated. Heaps of ashes were the stepping-stones, on which the passer-by, if he cared in the least for cleanliness, took care not to put his feet. Our friends were not dainty, but even they picked their way, till they got to some steps leading down to a small area, where a person standing would have his head about one foot below the level of the street, and might at the same time, without the least motion of his body, touch the window of the cellar and the damp, muddy wall right opposite. You went down one step even from the foul area into the cellar, in which a family of human beings lived. It was very dark inside. The window-panes, many of them, were broken and stuffed with rags, which was reason enough for the dusky light that pervaded the place even at midday. After the account I have given of the state of the street, no one can be surprised that, on going into the cellar inhabited by Davenport, the smell was so fœtid as almost to knock the two men down. Quickly recovering themselves, as those inured to such things do, they began to penetrate the thick darkness of the place, and to see three or four little children rolling on the damp, nay, wet brick floor, through which the stagnant filthy moisture of the street oozed up: the fireplace was empty and black; the wife sat on her husband's lair and cried in the dark loneliness.

Mrs. Gaskell had nothing of the reformer in her.

She had no crusade to preach; no economic theory to ventilate. She felt sure that if she could let the larger public see how things were, good must result; and she was content to put before it the circumstances. Unrelieved by humour *Mary Barton* makes painful reading. It is almost a tract; and the authoress in her indignation worked hard to present contrasts between St. James's and St. Giles's—to use a modern phrase, she 'piled on the agony.' The keynote of the book is to be found in a speech put into the mouth of John Barton: 'I'd rather see her earning her bread by the sweat of brow, as the Bible tells her she should do, ay, though she never got butter to her bread, than be like a do-nothing lady, worrying shopmen all morning, and screeching at her pianny all afternoon, and going to bed without having done a good turn to any of God's creatures but herself.'

The characters are almost without exception lay figures, introduced to build up the picture present in the authoress's mind. John Barton does not live, nor Mary, his daughter. Esther does not seize the imagination; and it is her circumstances, not she, that compel pity. Jem Wilson has some strength of character; but he is mawkish, unconvincing, too, when he wooes frivolous, silly Mary Barton. Harry Carson is the handsome, wealthy villain of everyday melodrama. Sally Leadbeater, vicious, enjoying an intrigue vicariously, is real enough; as is Job Legh, the working-man whose leisure is devoted to the

study of natural history. Best of all is the pathetic Alice Wilson.

'I sometimes think the Lord is against planning,' the old woman says reflectively. 'Whene'er I plan overmuch, He is sure to send and mar all my plans, as if He would ha' me put the future in His hands. Afore Christmas time, I was as full as full could be of going home for good and all; yo' have heard how I've wished it this terrible long time. And a young lass from behind Burton came into place in Manchester last Martinmas; so after a while she had a Sunday out, and she comes to me and tells me how some cousins o' mine bid her find me out, and say how glad they should be to ha' me bide wi' 'em, and look after th' childer, for they'n getten a big farm, and she's a deal to do among th' cows. So many's a winter's night did I lie awake, and think that, please God, come summer, I'd bid George and his wife goodbye, and go home at last. Little did I think how God Almighty would balk me, for not leaving my days in His hands, Who had led me through the wilderness hitherto. Here's George out of work, and more cast down than ever I seed him; wanting every chip o' comfort he can get, e'en afore this last heavy stroke; and now I'm thinking the Lord's finger points very clear to my fit abiding-place; and I'm sure if George and Jane can say "His Will be done," it's no more than what I'm beholden to do.'

The long-cherished wish was deferred again and again, and the work-worn Alice never went home until she went to the last home of all.

If the characters do not ring true, neither do the scenes seem natural. The fire at the mill has no other purpose than to show the hardships which fall upon the men who are thrown out of work. The

meeting of Mary's lovers, Harry Carson and Jem Wilson, lacks something of the real thing, for the dialogue, on Jem's side at least, conjures up memories of the Sunday-school books. Even the drawing of lots at the Chartists' meeting to settle who shall kill young Carson is unsatisfactory: there should be a thrill, which somehow is missing. The rest is melodrama—the suspicion of causing the death of his rival falling on Jem; the trial; the chase of the *John Cropper* to bring back the necessary witness; the establishing of the *alibi* at the last moment; the unreal, impossible lawyer asking the sailor how much he has been paid to give evidence in favour of the prisoner. But there is one fine moment, when, from the witness-box, Jem's mother addresses the judge in a choking voice:—

'"And now, sir, I've telled you the truth, and the whole truth, as he bid me; but don't you let what I have said go for to hang him; oh, my lord judge, take my word for it, he's as innocent as the child as has yet to be born. For sure, I, who am his mother, and have nursed him on my knee, and been gladdened by the sight of him every day since, ought to know him better than yon pack of fellows" (indicating the jury, while she strove against her heart to render her words distinct and clear for her dear son's sake), "who, I'll go bail, never saw him before this morning in all their born days. My lord judge, he's so good, I often wondered what harm there was in him; many is the time I've been fretted (for I'm frabbit enough at times), when I've scold't myself and said: "You ungrateful thing, the Lord God has given you Jem, and isn't that blessing enough for you?" But He has seen fit to punish me. If

Jem is—if Jem is—taken from me, I shall be a childless woman, and very poor, having naught left to love on earth, and I cannot say "His Will be done." I cannot, my lord judge, oh! I cannot.'

The sincerity of the pathos of that appeal must grip the heart of every mother and every mother's son among us.

If in *Mary Barton* the bias is in favour of the working classes, it must be conceded that in *North and South* (published seven years later) the other side of the picture is shown. Mrs. Gaskell was still as full of sympathy with the labourer, but experience had taught her much. Still puzzled by seeing 'two classes dependent on each other in every possible way, yet each evidently regarding the interests of the other as opposed to their own,' she realised that the manufacturers, as a class, were not mere bloated capitalists, but level-headed, hard-working men, fighting against heavy odds for their livelihood. Also, she saw more clearly that the misery of the labourers was sometimes brought about by improvidence, and that much unhappiness was caused by the tyranny of the trades-unions of that day.

But it is not only in this respect that improvement is to be noted. The book throughout shows a marked advance upon its predecessor. The construction is better, though the story is too long drawn out; and the character-drawing is really good.

Margaret, the proud, haughty, narrow-minded girl, with her tirades against trade, and her 'What in the world do manufacturers want with the classes, or literature, or the accomplishments of a gentleman?' is a novelist's creation. No girl of nineteen ever talked like her. Read her conversations with Thornton; read her soliloquy after she has saved the manufacturer from the mob. The dialogue is absolutely impossible, and one is profoundly grateful when, as it were, at her seventhly and lastly, her father begs her, 'Pray don't go into similes again.' Thornton, however, is alive, though he is a little wearing, as any man must be who never relaxes into a smile; but his mother, the lion-hearted woman of the people, not enervated by the luxury of her later years, is a splendid figure—the gem of the book. Mrs. Hale is well drawn, and in her there is unconscious humour, as when she compares the cotton-spinning Thornton with an old Hampshire tradesman: 'At any rate, the Gormans made carriages for half the gentlemen of the country, and were brought into some kind of intercourse with them.' There is pathos in her, too, when, on her death-bed, crying for her son, she says to her daughter wistfully, and apologetically, 'He was my first baby, Margaret.' Another touching moment is when John Thornton, returning home after his rejection by Margaret, goes up to his mother and, kissing her grey, stony face, breaks the news to her: 'No one loves me—no

one cares for me—but you, Mother.' The minor characters are not unworthy of mention: the complaining Mrs. Shaw; her feather-brained daughter, the beautiful Edith; the formal, priggish Henry Lennox; Nicholas Higgins and his girls; and Mr. Bell, who is so anxious to have Margaret with him after her father's death that he is prepared, as a *pis aller*, even to marry her aunt. Mr. Hale is drawn from the authoress's father, who, in his youth, with his friend, the Reverend George Wicke of Monton, resigned his living, believing it wrong to be a 'hired teacher of religion.' Not the worst part of the book is the contrast drawn between life in a quiet Hampshire parsonage and in the great, active, bustling Milton-Northern.

Though *Ruth* has not the merits of the two books already discussed, which bring the reader face to face with the poor and their grinding poverty, yet, considered as a story, it is perhaps more interesting. The picture of the life of the workers at Mrs. Mason's dressmaking establishment is particularly good; and the tragedy of the eponymous heroine is well described. Poor, pretty, weak, loving little Ruth! Yet she can rise to grandeur, as when, after Bellingham, having failed to tempt her a second time, proposes marriage, she turns on him with scathing contempt: 'If there were no other reason to prevent our marriage but the one fact that it would bring Leonard' (their son) 'into contact with you, that

would be enough.' This story of a seduced girl who endeavours to bring up her child, withholding from the world the secret of its birth, has never been very popular; and indeed it is a sad, though in parts a beautiful, book. One delightfully humorous character it contains: Sally, whom Jeremiah Dixon wooes with the offer of 'a four-roomed cottage, furniture conformable, and eighty pounds a year.' All this she rejects without a pang. Then Dixon remembers he has a pig that will be ready for killing at Christmas: 'Well, now, would you believe it? The pig were a temptation. I'd a receipt for curing hams. . . . However, I resisted. Says I, very stern, because I felt I'd been wavering, "Master Dixon, once for all, pig or no pig, I'll not marry you."'

Wives and Daughters, which was appearing in *The Cornhill Magazine* when Mrs. Gaskell died, is an excellent picture of English home life, and it makes up for a certain weakness of construction by its excellent characterisation. Preceding this, came *Sylvia's Lovers*, which most critics have been content to pass by with brief and more or less patronising comment. This is surprising, for it is an admirable book, with a sound, well-developed story; and it is delightful because of its broad outlook on life, with much human love and human pity—the tale of a great wrong redeemed by a splendid expiation. The scene is laid at Whitby (called in the novel Monkshaven) at the close of the eighteenth century, when the

press-gang was doing its worst. The local colour is excellent, and the accuracy of the methods of impressment vouched for by such unimpeachable authorities as Sir Charles Napier and General Perronet Thompson. The charming Sylvia; the good housewife, her mother; the humorous Daniel Robson; the coarse Molly Corney; the brothers Foster, who recall the better-known Cheerybles; the loving Philip; the dashing Kinraid—each and all are distinctive. There is, too, an unusual variety of scene — the quay, to which the whalers return, the Fosters' shop, the farmhouse life. There is humour, as when the Fosters make over their business to Philip Hepburn and William Coulson, and, inviting the young men to their house for that purpose, pretend they must find a well-to-do purchaser.

But the main theme is of stern and dramatic interest. Kinraid, betrothed to Sylvia, is impressed; and Philip, withholding the message with which he was charged, lets the girl think her lover is dead, and in time brings to a successful end his own wooing. Years later, Kinraid returns, only to find her married. The truth is told, and Sylvia turns from her husband, and will not hear the cry that comes from his heart. She determines to go away with the man whom she has always loved. His arm round her waist, they move towards the door—just then the baby cried.

'Hark!' said she, starting away from Kinraid. 'Baby's crying for me. His child! yes, it is his child. I'd forgotten

that—forgotten all. I'll make my vow now, lest I lose mysel' again. I'll never forgive yon man, nor live with him as his wife again. All that's done and ended. He's spoilt my life, he's spoilt it for as long as ever I live on this earth; but neither yo' nor him shall spoil my soul. It goes hard wi' me, Charley, it does indeed. I'll just give yo' one kiss, one little kiss, and then, so help me God, I'll niver see nor hear till—no, not that, not that is needed—I'll niver see,—sure that's enough,—I'll niver see yo' again on this side heaven, so help me God! I'm bound and tied, but I've sworn my oath to him as well as yo': there's things I will do, and there's things I won't. Kiss me once more. God help me, he's gone!'

Sylvia and her husband cannot live together after this. Philip enlists, is wounded saving Kinraid's life, and to him on his death-bed comes Sylvia, nearer to loving him than she has ever been. The end of the book is needlessly prolonged, and there is a too liberal use of coincidence; but these defects may be overlooked in the general excellence of the story.

Though *Cranford* was one of the earliest of Mrs. Gaskell's books, it has here been left to the last, on the principle observed by children who put aside the plums until they have finished the duff. All the other novels were written with the consciousness of power, and it is easy to see that the authoress had no misgivings. They will all live long, but *Cranford* will never be allowed to die. Admirable as are all the rest, *Cranford* stands out unique, individual, not only as the masterpiece of the writer, but as an acknowledged masterpiece of English literature. It

is, as Lord Houghton declared, 'the purest piece of humoristic description that has been added to British literature since Charles Lamb.' This is the more astonishing because the great want in all the other books is humour. Written after *Mary Barton*, it brought Mrs. Gaskell to the very forefront of literary notabilities. The wonder is that she never pursued this new vein. It is as if in this supreme effort she exhausted her humour. Not in her later works, not in *Sylvia's Lovers*, nor in the exquisite idyll, *Cousin Phillis*, nor even in *Wives and Daughters* did she ever recapture it; it can be detected only in such trifles as *Mr. Harrison's Confessions*, the little love-story of a young country doctor, and *My Lady Ludlow*, a short sketch of an old lady who hated dissenters and was cured in the end by her innate good sense.

'I believe the art of telling a story is born with some people,' Mrs. Gaskell declared. To a certain extent she had the gift; but she produced her best when she put it from her. There is no pretence of a tale in *Cranford*, which consists of a series of pictures of society in the little country town of Knutsford, in Cheshire. Cranford, we learn, 'is in possession of the Amazons; all the holders of houses above a certain rent are women. If a married couple come to settle in the town, somehow the gentleman disappears; he is either fairly frightened to death by being the only man in the Cranford evening

parties, or he is accounted for by being with his regiment, his ship, or closely engaged in business all the week in the great neighbouring town of Drumble,[1] distant only twenty miles on a railroad.' It was a very genteel neighbourhood, and had rules and regulations for most occasions, that were as inexorable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. The hours for calling were between twelve and three, and a formal call was only to last fifteen minutes by the clock. The result was that 'no topic of absorbing interest was ever started, lest the time should be forgotten.' They never spoke of money, because that subject savoured of commerce and trade, 'and though some might be poor, we were all aristocratic.' There was an ominous silence after Miss Jessie Brown referred to her uncle, her mother's brother, who was a shopkeeper in Edinburgh. It was from him that Miss Jessie obtained some Shetland wool of a particular kind for Miss Pole, and on the strength of that and a new knitting-stitch, these ladies set up a kind of intimacy; though this must have suffered later, when Miss Pole became more absorbed in crochet than she had ever been in knitting. It was Miss Pole who tried to unravel the mysteries of legerdemain by studying the article in the Encyclopædia, and who, perplexed by diagrams, declared 'conjuring and witchcraft is a mere affair of the alphabet.'

[1] Manchester.

For the most part, the society was composed of prim old maids, who wore calashes and 'niddle-noddling' caps; in whose life a new carpet was an event, and a 'preference' party dissipation.

It was a peaceful existence, though once the harmony was disturbed, when poor, brave, cheerful Captain Brown spoke of *The Pickwick Papers*, which were then being issued in monthly parts. Miss Jenkyns regarded this as rank heresy, and she compared Dickens with her favourite Dr. Johnson, in favour of the great lexicographer. 'It is quite a different sort of thing, my dear madam,' expostulated the old soldier. 'I am quite aware of that,' retorted Miss Jenkyns, 'and I make allowances.' Whereupon it is to be recorded that the Captain damned Dr. Johnson! In spite of their idiosyncrasies, however, it would be difficult to find a better-hearted community. Distress of any kind roused in its gentle breasts all that was good and kind. 'Things that many would despise, and actions which it seemed scarcely worth while to perform, were all attended to in Cranford. The rose-leaves that were gathered ere they fell, to make into a pot-pourri for some one who had no garden; the little bundles of lavender-flowers sent to strew the drawers of some town-dweller, or to burn in the chamber of some invalid.'

The society was small, for Cranford folk were very exclusive. Their ways were curious, however, for, while they went to tea with Miss Betty Barker, the

milliner, they would not call on Mrs. Fitz-Adam, the surgeon's widowed sister. When Lady Glenmire came to stay with her sister-in-law, the autocratic Honourable Mrs. Jamieson, there was a great flutter, resulting in the furbishing of furbelows and caps. They liked her, for she was a bright little woman; but it took them a long time to make up their minds what course to pursue when, with the courage of her love, she married Mr. Hoggins, the surgeon. If there is much humour and a little genial satire, there is pathos in plenty. The death of Miss Brown is beautifully, tenderly described; and surely no one can read without a tear Major Gordon's wooing of the forlorn, downcast Miss Jessie of the dimples.

But all that is best in the book, the truest humour, the truest pathos, is centred round Miss Matty. There is the story of her love for Mr. Holbrook, whom she had refused because her sister, to whom she had always deferred, had thought it would be a *mésalliance*. She had cherished in sadness the memory of him for more than thirty years, when they met again. A few months later he died, and Miss Matty made a strong effort to conceal her feelings. It would not have been 'the thing' to show deep sorrow for an unmarried man who was not a relative. However, she did ask the little milliner of Cranford to make her cap something like the Hon. Mrs. Jamieson's. 'But she wears widows' caps, ma'am.' 'Oh? I only meant some-

thing in the style—not widows, of course; but rather like Mrs. Jamieson's.' Poor Miss Matty! When she reflected how her life had been spoiled, she sent for her servant. 'Perhaps, Martha, you may some time meet with a young man you like and who likes you. I did say you were not to have followers, but if you meet with such a young man, and tell me, and I find he is respectable, I have no objection to his coming to see you once a week. God forbid,' said she, in a low voice, 'that I should grieve any young hearts.' Growing old, Miss Matty thought fit to destroy her parents' love-letters, for 'no one, my dear, will care for them when I have gone.' There were her mother's letters to her husband, 'treasured as fondly by him as if they had been *M. T. Ciceronis Epistolæ*'; and her father's letters to his wife, loving and tender. One of them was endorsed by the receiver: 'Hebrew verses sent me by my honoured husband. I thowt to have had a letter about killing the pig, but must wait.'

Miss Matty often thought about the past; of her high-spirited brother Peter, who ran away after a flogging, and so broke his mother's heart; and of her own life, as it was and as she had thought it might be.

'"My father once made us keep a diary, in two columns; on one side we were to put down in the morning what we thought would be the course and events of the coming day, and at night we were to put down on the other side what

really happened. It would be to some people rather a sad way of telling their lives"—(a tear dropped upon my hand at these words)—"I don't mean that mine has been sad, only so very different to what I expected. I remember, one winter's evening, sitting over our bedroom fire with Deborah—I remember it as if it were yesterday—and we were planning our future lives,—both of us were planning, though only she talked about it. She said she should like to marry an archdeacon, and write his charges; and you know, my dear, she never was married, and, for aught I know, she never spoke to an unmarried archdeacon in her life. I never was ambitious, nor could I have written charges, but I thought I could manage a house (my mother used to call me her right hand), and I was always so fond of little children—the shyest babies would stretch out their little arms to come to me; when I was a girl, I was half my leisure time nursing in the neighbouring cottages; but I don't know how it was, when I grew sad and grave—which I did a year or two after this time—the little things drew back from me, and I am afraid I lost the knack, though I am just as fond of children as ever, and have a strange yearning at my heart whenever I see a mother with her baby in her arms. Nay, my dear" (and by a sudden blaze which sprang up from a fall of the unstirred coals, I saw that her eyes were full of tears—gazing intently on some vision of what might have been), "do you know, I dream sometimes that I have a little child—always the same—a little girl of about two years old; she never grows, though I have dreamt about her for many years. I don't think I ever dream of any words or sounds she makes; she is very noiseless and still, but she comes to me when she is very sorry or very glad, and I have wakened with the clasp of her dear little arms round my neck. Only last night—perhaps because I had gone to bed thinking of this ball for Phœbe—my little darling came in my dream, and put up her mouth to be kissed, just as I have seen real babies do to real mothers before going to bed. But all this is

nonsense, dear! Only, don't be frightened by Miss Pole from being married. I can fancy it may be a very happy state, and a little credulity helps one on through life very smoothly—better than always doubting and doubting and seeing difficulties and disagreeables in everything."'

Evil days came upon Miss Matty with the failure of the Town and County Bank, but she bore the blow with quiet dignity. Fortunately, she had friends who came to her assistance, including the faithful Martha, who would not leave her old mistress, and said so defiantly, with arms akimbo. 'No, not if she gives me warning every hour in the day.' But, in the end, Miss Matty's brother comes from India, and restores her to a position of comfort. Perhaps there is a little too much of coincidence about the finding of Peter and his return, but surely the reader does not exist who will not welcome the improbability, since it brings Miss Matty some years of peace before she enters the Haven of Rest.

'Mrs. Gaskell has done what neither I nor any other female writer in France can accomplish,' George Sand observed to Lord Houghton; 'she has written novels which excite the deepest interest in men of the world, and yet which every girl will be the better for reading.' This is generous praise and true. Mrs. Gaskell wrote with sympathy and with understanding; and throughout her works the woman's great heart peeps through. Indeed, tenderness is the keynote of all her work. If she is not

classed with novelists of the first rank, few will refuse to admit that her position in English fiction is enviable. If her society folk are not very convincing, at least none may question the realism of her pictures of the working classes. And *Cranford* is beyond all praise.

JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU

CONTEMPORARY with Wilkie Collins, the acknowledged master of English sensational fiction, flourished another disciple of the same school, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. The latter, born in 1814, ten years before the greater author, began his literary career as a writer of verse, in which branch of letters, while still in the early twenties, he achieved considerable success, notably with the popular ballads, *Phaudhrig Croohore* and the better known *Shamus O'Brien*, which, being recited by Samuel Lover during his tour through the United States, was for a long time attributed to him. It was long after that Le Fanu ventured into the field of fiction with *The Cock and Anchor* (1845), a chronicle of Old Dublin, that neither then nor since attracted much attention; and *The Fortunes of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien* (1877), a tale of the wars of King James. Then for many years Le Fanu devoted himself solely to journalism and politics, and it was not until the death of his wife made it imperative for him to seek some more engrossing labour in which to forget his sorrow that he reverted to the writing of novels.

The first production of his second period, *The*

House by the Churchyard (1863), shows him as a novelist at the turning of the ways. It was, like his earlier work, an Irish story; but, like his later books, based upon the mysterious and the supernatural, it showed the influence of Wilkie Collins, who, in the meantime, had been building up his reputation with *Antonina*, *Basil*, *Hide and Seek*, and, more particularly, *The Woman in White* and *No Name*. Thenceforth, Le Fanu followed more and more closely in the footsteps of that author, and, although he was far from being a slavish imitator, in each of the baker's dozen of books which came after there is sensation, mystery, or mysticism.

This change was undoubtedly an improvement, for in his stories of Irish life he was distinctly inferior to Lever, whose high spirits he lacked, and even to Carleton and Lover. Nor was he more successful in his historical romance, *Torlogh O'Brien*, written in the vein of Scott, and showing only the faults and none of the merits of that master. Scott was then Le Fanu's idol, and from the attempt at the sublime it is obvious he aspired to be to Ireland what the other was to Scotland. Descriptive passages there are in plenty, and soliloquies galore, and much of the dialogue of the 'quoth'a' order. '"Who and what are you, sirrah, who shame not to offer rudeness to an unprotected girl?" demanded the stalwart cavalier, in the same deep tones of contemptuous command. "Forbear, scoundrel, and begone! or by

Saint Jago! your punishment shall be sharp and lasting!"' It is all so stilted and so rarely condescends to descend to real life Read the heroine's prayer, she who so moveless, so literally death-like before, had on a sudden raised her quenched and sunken eyes passionately towards heaven, clasped her thin hands, and, wringing them bitterly in what seemed the agony of prayer, broke forth in low and earnest accents.

'Oh, that it might be so! that it might be so! Oh! that my worthless life might yield this one good and worthy service—that I might, unseen and lost as I am, guard them from this mysterious danger! Inscrutable are the ways of heaven, wonderful its dispensation, that I, *I* should have been carried hither, on the current of that dreadful destiny of which I am now the unresisting sport—borne to this place, cast among these people, just as my presence here—weak, worthless, perhaps forgotten—oh! bitter word, forgotten!—as I am —may prove a blessing; may open an escape; may save life, and rescue innocence. Weak and imperfect are my means; but there is One who can even with the folly of the weak confound all the wisdom of the wicked, and bring the designs of the crafty utterly to naught. In His hands their safety is, and He with His mighty arm protects the good and pure.'

This is enough to show the quality of the book, clad in the full panoply of the historical romance of old, and it may be dismissed with the lines that bring to a close the opening chapter: 'Enough—the spell is over, the lines and colours shift and change, shadows and lights are lost and mingled, and all is

once more whirling and blended in vague, impenetrable cloud and darkness.'

Very angry was Le Fanu at being ranked among the sensation school of fiction, and vigorously he penned an *Apologia* in 'A Preliminary Word' to *Uncle Silas*, wherein he begged the Press to 'insist upon the limitation of that degrading term to the peculiar type of fiction which it was originally intended to indicate, and prevent its being made to include the legitimate school of tragic English romance, which has been ennobled and, in great measure, founded by the genius of Sir Walter Scott.' He remonstrated against the promiscuous application of the term 'sensation' to those works which, he declared, in nowise transgressed any of the canons of construction and morality which the author of the Waverley novels imposed upon himself. He assumed that no one would describe Scott's romances as 'sensation novels,' although there is not a single tale in which death, crime and, in some form, mystery have not a place.

'Passing by those grand romances of *Ivanhoe*, *Old Mortality*, and *Kenilworth*, with their terrible intricacies of crime and bloodshed, constructed with so fine a mastery of the art of exciting surprise and horror,' he remarked, 'let the reader pick out those few exceptional novels in the series which profess to paint contemporary manners and the scenes of common life; and, remembering in *The Antiquary* the vision in the tapestried chamber, the duel, the horrible secret and the death of old Elspeth, the drowned fisherman, and, above

all, the tremendous situation of the tide-bound party under the cliffs; and in *St. Ronan's Well*, the long-drawn mystery, the suspicion of insanity, and the catastrophe of suicide—determine whether an epithet which it would be profanation to apply to the structure of any, even the most exciting, of Sir Walter Scott's stories, is fairly applicable to tales which, though illimitably inferior in execution, yet observe the same limitations of incident and the same moral aims.'

But would it be profanation to apply the term 'sensation' to Scott's romances? Surely any story, however good, that records deeds of violence, that depends on situations rather than atmosphere, and on actions rather than characterisation, comes under this heading. One who writes of things sensational cannot reasonably object to his story being classed as sensational; and Le Fanu's mistake was in regarding the term as opprobrious. Take this summary of *In a Glass Darkly*:

'Five tales from the diary of a neuropathic doctor, a very banquet of horrors. In the first, a clergyman is haunted by a demoniacal visitor in the shape of a black monkey, which finally drives him to suicide. The author dips into Swedenborgianism and gives a study of vampires. The others are about gruesome apparitions, trances, and other sensational themes.'

No, Le Fanu is a sensational novelist, as Mrs. Gaskell is a domestic novelist, Disraeli (usually) a political novelist, and Whyte-Melville a sporting novelist; and there are worse things than being bracketed with Mrs. Radcliffe, Mrs. Shelley, Maturin,

and Wilkie Collins. *The Moonstone* is the high-water mark of English sensational fiction, but it is not thought less of because of that, and, indeed, for this one story most readers would barter all the works of Le Fanu.

Le Fanu was willing to stand or fall by *Uncle Silas*, and as this was acclaimed, on its production, as a masterpiece of the terrible and mysterious, it is worth while to examine it. The story is simple, and not very original. Austin Ruthyn has a younger brother, Silas, a rake-helly gambler and *debauché*, upon whom has fallen the suspicion of the foul murder in his own house of a bookmaker to whom he owed large sums of money. So strong is the suspicion that Silas is shunned by all his neighbours, but Austin, while believing little good of him, cannot think him guilty of this dastardly crime, and therefore supports him with money and backs him with his influence. Finding that his efforts are vain, and that society will have nothing to do with him, Austin conceives the plan of appointing Silas in his will sole guardian of his daughter Maud, thinking thus, by this public announcement of his trust, to confound the calumniators. Naturally, this fails, as it appears merely as a piece of mad folly to entrust a young girl to the care of such a man, who, moreover, is the next of kin and heir-at-law to all her vast possessions. Soon after Maud is domiciled with him, Silas endeavours, gently enough, to urge

her into marriage with his ne'er-do-well son, Dudley; and he abandons this scheme only when it comes to his knowledge that Dudley is already married. Maud's money must be secured, and, comparatively fair means failing, foul play ensues, having for its object the death of the heiress. The plan is skilful enough. Her companion—Silas's daughter—is sent away; her friends, on one pretext and another, forbidden the house; her maid is removed; and she herself starts ostensibly to go to a finishing school in France. In reality, however, she is driven to a place some miles away, brought back by a circuitous route, and secreted in a chamber in an unused part of the great house, where she is to be drugged, knocked on the head, and buried at night in the grounds. It so happens, however, that a wicked old governess, one of the accomplices, gets intoxicated, drinks the doctored claret, and in the dark is killed by mistake, while Maud flies from the room, is rescued, and lives happily ever after.

This is sensational enough, but Le Fanu was not satisfied, and, in his desire to strengthen it, he made every effort to secure an atmosphere of mystery, not hesitating to adopt various devices that are scarcely justifiable, and certainly are inartistically heaped one upon the other. The very chapter headings are intended to give a thrill. 'A Warning,' 'Sights and Noises,' 'An Arrival at Dead of Night,' 'Lady Knollys removes a Coverlet,' 'A Midnight

Visitor,' 'Somebody in the Room with the Coffin,' 'In the Hour of Death.' Austin is a half-mad fellow. The Swedenborgian Doctor Brierly is a disappointment—he shapes so well as a villain, but turns out an honest man—but he generally arrives secretly, and his movements are 'wrop't in myst'ry.' Mrs. Radcliffe's favourite devices to terrify her readers were mysterious lights and figures and lamps which fall, or are blown out, at critical moments: Le Fanu, whose machinery was not so good, indulged in these secret midnight arrivals and departures. In his books nothing of importance happens in the day; he required the adventitious aid of the dark. Austin gives Maud the key of a desk to be given only to one person, and he frightens the nervous child by continual repetitions and murmurings of '*Remember* this key.' Then, from the library father and daughter returned, 'in silence; the storm outside, like a dirge on a grand organ, accompanying our flitting.' Storms always come at the right moment in this book, and there is a very tempest of wind and rain when Lady Knollys tells little Maud the story of Silas's life. When a governess comes to the house—which, of course, is ghost-haunted—Lady Knollys gives utterance to a terribly suggestive warning: '*And, Maud, don't let her meddle with your food.*' The governess herself, a ghoul-like person, is, on her re-appearance, seen through a glass-door, looking 'like a livid mask, with chalky

eyes.' The arrival at Silas's place is made to take place after dark, when the house is unlighted, and stairs and corridors, illuminated only by a candle, appear remarkably eerie. No wonder, after Lady Knollys's warning of the risk attending her stay, that the girl felt an undefined sense of danger! At the end, closeted in the unfamiliar room, she

'suddenly heard a little *clink* in the yard beneath. I peeped out, but saw nothing. The sound was repeated, however—sometimes more frequently, sometimes at long intervals. At last, in the deep shadow next the farther wall, I thought I could discover a figure, sometimes erect, sometimes stooping and bowing towards the earth. I could see this figure only in the rudest outline mingling with the dark. Like a thunderbolt it smote my brain, "They are making my grave!"'

Now, though it is stated that the heroine felt a sense of impending danger, in spite of all the author can do, the reader does not share her alarm. Indeed, the suspense of the author is the only real thing in the book: his efforts to extort a thrill are too palpable to deceive to-day the merest tyro in novel-reading. This failure is due to the fact that there is no living human interest: which is to say, the characters lack vitality. Maud is a shadow; her first lover, Captain Oakley, is left undefined; and of her second admirer, Lord Ilford, practically nothing is said. Milly, however, is real flesh-and-blood, ill-bred, unkempt, yet soon realising her deficiencies and trying to overcome them; but the curate with whom she falls in love only passes across a page,

leaving absolutely no impression. Moreover, the love-interest has no bearing on the story, and is apparently introduced only to enable the author to say in the last paragraph that the girls are happy. Meg Hawkes is merely a novelist's lay-figure—bad at first, good afterwards for no reason save that the creator finds it convenient. Dudley, in the author's words, is 'shy, impudent, awkward, conceited—a most intolerable bumpkin'; but not unreal, which is more than can be said of his father, Silas, in spite of much pains to make him live.

'A face like marble, with a fearful monumental look, and, for an old man, singularly vivid, strange eyes, the singularity of which grew upon me as I looked; for his eyebrows were still black, though his hair descended from his temple in long locks of the purest silver and as fine as silk, nearly to his shoulders. He rose, tall and slight, a little stooped, all in black, with an ample black velvet tunic, which was rather a gown than a coat, with loose sleeves, showing his snowy shirt some way up the arm, and a pair of wrist buttons, then quite out of fashion, which glimmered aristocratically with diamonds. I know I can't convey an idea of this apparition, drawn, as it seemed, in black and white, venerable, bloodless, fiery-eyed, with its singular look of power, and an expression so bewildering—was it derision, or anguish, or cruelty, or patience?'

Yet not this, nor other descriptions, help to make him real. And it is in this respect that Le Fanu compares badly with Wilkie Collins, for, while his are dummies, the characters of the latter remain long after the book itself is forgotten; and many who

have forgotten the story of *No Name* recall the figure of Captain Horatio Wragge, as those who have only a dim memory of the intricate plot of *The Woman in White* are not likely ever to forget the redoubtable Count Fosco.

The secret in *The Wyvern Mystery* is not so obvious, but when it is solved, it is found not to be so very mysterious after all. There is a woman who believes herself to be married to a man—who only says she is mistaken—but what ceremony took place, or if any ceremony took place, is not told. When this business is exploded, there is the exchange of a child. As for the conclusion, it may be said of this book, as Mrs. Radcliffe wrote of one of hers: 'In reviewing this story, we perceive a singular and striking instance of moral retribution.' Yet it shows a very marked advance, for it is, on the whole, better written, though the dialogue is not often real, and is sometimes ridiculous, as when Charles addresses his wife, on arrival at their home, Carwell Grange:—

> 'Welcome, darling, to our poor retreat, made bright and beautiful by your presence; but how unworthy to receive you none knows better than your Ry. Still, for a short time—and it will be but short—you will endure it. Delightful your presence will make it to me; and to you, darling, my love will, perhaps, render it tolerable.'

But if this is stilted, there is occasionally a passage that compensates, as when the well-drawn Mildred

Tarnley, with an old servant's licence, turns on her master and sternly upbraids him :—

'None of that nonsense, man! Ye ha' brought that poor young lady into a doubtful path, and ye must stand by her now. You're come of no cowardly stock, and ye shan't gi' her up, and your babe that's coming, poor little thing, to shame and want for lack of a man's heart under your ribs. I say I know nowt o' the rights of it; but God will judge ye if ye leave her now.'

The autocratic old Squire is admirably portrayed, alike in his hours of tenderness as in his savage moods. The proud man, who had adopted Alice out of pity, and had come to love her better than a father, inclining, even at his great age, to marry her, learns of her secret marriage and flight with his elder son. Every night he had locked the door that led to her apartments, and, on the evening after her departure, mechanically he did the same.

'"Ay, ay," said he bitterly, recollecting himself, "the stable door when the nag's stolen. I don't care if the old house was blown down to-night—I wish it was. She was a kind little thing before that d——d fellow—what could she see in him?—good-for-nothing—old as I am, I'd pitch him over my head like a stook o' barley. Here was a plot—she was a good little thing, but see how she was drew into it—damn her, they're all so false! I'll find out who was in it, I will; I'll find it all out. There's Tom Sherwood, he's one. I'll pitch 'em all out, neck and crop, out o' Wyvern door. I'd rather fill my house with rats than with two-legged vermin. Let 'em pack away to Carwell, and starve with that big pippin-squeezing ninny. I hope in God's justice he'll never live to put his foot in Wyvern. I could

shoot myself, I think, but for that. She might ha' waited till the old man died, at any rate; I was kind to her—a fool—a fool!'

The brute was strong in him, but, to the end, his heart was in the right place, as when he sent for his tenant, Dobbs, who came in fear and trembling, knowing that old Squire Harry, in his anger, regarded neither his own interests nor any other man's safety.

'Ho, ho, Dobbs, you're not fit for Craybourne, the farm's too much for you, and I've nothing else to gi'e ye. . . . You're a fool, Dobbs—you're a fool—you're not equal to it, man. I wonder ye didn't complain o' your rent. It's too much—too high by half. I told Cresswell to let you off every rent day a good penn'orth, for future.'

For the rest, there is no life in the heroine, Alice Maybell, nor in Charles, her husband, who is merely a weak-willed man without distinction; while Lady Wyndale is an older Monica Knollys, and Dulcibella another Mary Quince. Harry Fairfield is better portrayed—the specious villain whom Le Fanu loved to draw, a blood relation of Stanley Lake in *Wylder's Hand*, to both of whom the following passage was intended to apply:—

'It is a loose way of talking and thinking which limits the vice of hypocrisy to the matter of religion. It counterfeits all good, and dissimulates all evil, every day and hour; and among the men who frankly admit themselves to be publicans and sinners, whose ways are notoriously worldly, and who never affected religion, are some of the worst and meanest hypocrites on earth.'

But in these books, as in *Wylder's Hand*, *Checkmate*, and the rest, there is no broad outlook on life: it is all hole-in-the-corner fiction. The plots are often ingenious and not unskilfully constructed, but their development is so laboured that the reader is never deceived into believing them. Hawthorne has defined romance-writing as 'to dream strange things and make them look like truth.' This is what Le Fanu never achieved. Sometimes he did dream strange things: never did he make them real. He depended for his effects on the terrible and the mysterious, but his machinery was never adequate to the demands he put upon it, and even when he heaped Ossa on Pelion, he leaves us undismayed. Humour he had none absolutely, and only very rarely was he tender. Yet there is the exception when he tells of the parents of Alice Maybell.

'Melancholy, gentle vicar! Some good judges, I believe, pronounced his sermons admirable. Seedily clothed, with kindly patience visiting his poor; very frugal—his pretty young wife and he were yet happy in the light and glow of the true love that is eternal. He was to her the nonpareil of vicars—the loveliest, wisest, wittiest, and best of men. She was to him—what shall I say? The *same* beautiful first love. Never a day older. Every summer threw new gold on her rich hair, and a softer and brighter bloom on her cheeks, and made her dearer and dearer than he could speak. He could only look and feel his heart swelling with a vain yearning to tell the love that lighted his face with its glory and called a mist to his kind eye. And then came a time when she had a secret to tell her Willie. Full of a wild

fear and delight, in their tiny drawing-room, clasped in each other's arms, they wept for joy, and a kind of wonder and some dim, unspoken tremblings of fear, and loved one another it seemed, as it were, more desperately than ever.'

Le Fanu, popular enough in his day, is now sinking fast into obscurity. This is not due to the reaction that follows on the heels of over-praise, as is the case, notably, of Anthony Trollope, but is the inevitable result of the lack of merit in his works. The wonder is that he was ever regarded very highly, for at his best he is little more than mediocre. His books recall the once popular riddle, 'Why do married men live longer than single men?' with its answer, 'They don't, but it seems longer.' 'Why,' one might ask, 'are the stories of Le Fanu so much longer than those of, say, Wilkie Collins?' The answer would be, 'They are not, but they seem so.'

HENRY KINGSLEY.

From a drawing by William S. Hunt, in the National Portrait Gallery.

HENRY KINGSLEY

It is often difficult to find rhyme or reason for the decision of the public in questions of literature. Why, for instance, has Charles Kingsley been taken to the heart of the great mass of readers, while Henry Kingsley remains to them only a name? In vain may the entire field of conjecture be explored for a satisfactory explanation, for the qualities of the work of the younger brother are essentially popular. His stories are bright, imbued with humour and not without pathos, with plots more than sufficient to sustain the interest to the end, and character-drawing usually good and sometimes magnificent. In Australia the merits of Henry Kingsley have long since been recognised, but this is probably to be accounted for, not by the superior discernment of our cousins across the seas, but by the fact that he was the first writer of note to lay some scenes of his novels at the Antipodes. In England, however, he is rarely read and never discussed, save by a few men of letters: to the rest the name of Kingsley suggests always the Rector of Eversley, the popular preacher, novelist, and poet. Yet Henry has not been entirely without appreciation, for critics who

see life and letters so differently as Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Andrew Lang, and Mr. Augustine Birrell have united to praise him; while Mr. Clement K. Shorter has edited his works with a most praiseworthy enthusiasm. It is rather curious that it should be the critics, and not the public, who approve of this author. The general impression is that the critic is swayed unduly by style; and perhaps this is not far from being as a rule the truth, for it cannot be denied that there have been writers who, possessing the gift of style and little else in the way of merit, have extorted high praise from those who sit in judgment. Now, never was there among English novelists worthy of serious consideration a writer less academic than Henry Kingsley. He had little sense of style, indeed often his English was slipshod, and on occasions even his grammar was not above reproach; and he has been accused, not without some show of reason, of many obvious faults—of elementary solecisms, bad Irish and worse Scottish dialect, frequent improbabilities and occasional impossibilities. Also, it may be added, he was not averse to the repetition of situations, nor to the undue employment of coincidence. What a tribute, then, is the critics' approval!

The secret of Henry Kingsley's attraction is the possession of the one quality that in the long run outweighs all others: he has the saving grace of charm. He is so human, too, so like a big rollicking schoolboy, that no one out of whose life

has gone the joy of youth should take up his volumes. He holds out to the reader the right hand of good-fellowship, while through every page shines a delightful personality. As he tells his story you cannot help listening, you cannot help being interested, you cannot help laughing with him. Who can keep a straight face when at the end of *Geoffrey Hamlyn* he proceeds *à la mode* to make all his characters happy? He pairs them off in the most approved manner, until the only dissatisfied person in the book is Sam Buckley, whose dream it is to recover the ancestral estate of Clere. Now Sam, being a young man after the author's heart, must not have a wish ungratified. If he wants Clere, Clere he must have; and Henry Kingsley is the man to get it for him. With great seriousness he puts the matter right.

'Does any one of my readers remember that our dear old friend Agnes Buckley's maiden name was Talbot, and that her father owned the property adjoining Clere? "We do not remember," you say; "or at least, if we do, we are not bound to; you have not mentioned the circumstance since the very beginning of this excessively wearisome book, forty years ago." Allow me to say, that I have purposely avoided mentioning them all along, in order that, at this very point, I might come down on you like a thunderbolt with this piece of information; namely:—that Talbot of Beaulieu Castle, the towers of which were visible from Clere Terrace, had died without male issue. That Marian and Gertrude Talbot, the two pretty girls, Agnes Buckley's eldest sisters, who used to come in and see old Marmaduke when James was campaigning, had never married. That Marian was dead. That Gertrude,

a broken old maid, was sole owner of Beaulieu Castle with eight thousand a year; and that Agnes Buckley, her sister, and consequently, Sam, as next in succession, was her heir.'

Then, just as you are feeling rather disgusted at this old-fashioned way of doing things—old-fashioned even for a writer in the sixties—you come across this footnote:

'If you will examine the most successful of our modern novels, you will find that the great object of the author is to keep the reader in a constant state of astonishment. Following this rule, I give myself great credit for this *coup de théâtre*. I am certain that the most experienced novel reader could not have foreseen it. I may safely say that none of my readers will be half so much astonished as I was myself.'

He has had his little joke—he was not serious, after all—in fact, was, amiably enough, poking fun at some of his contemporaries. You cannot help laughing at the fellow's impudence, if only because it is so obvious that he enjoyed this little burlesque very heartily.

But though in this case he had his tongue in his cheek, he was fond of introducing into his books genealogies so intricate that their accuracy has to be taken for granted, and with them the concomitant evils of secret marriages, children changed at birth, and other devices of a similar nature. This sort of thing was part of his equipment as a novelist—and indisputably the worst part: but it does not really matter, for plots are never with him very important,

although as a rule he constructed them carefully and kept up the mystery. Still, no one would read Henry Kingsley for the 'story' alone. He would not be bound by any hard and fast rule, and he made havoc of the traditions of fiction.

'If I thought I was writing for a reader who was going to criticise my way of telling my story, I tell you the honest truth, I should tell my story very poorly indeed,' he confessed in the course of one of his books. 'Of course I must submit to the same criticism as my betters. But there are times when I feel that I must have my reader go hand in hand with me. To do so he must follow the same train of ideas as I do. At such times I write as naturally as I can. I see that greater men than I have done the same. I see that Captain Marryat, for instance, at a particular part of his noblest novel, *The King's Own*, has put in a chapter about his grandmother and the spring tides, which, for perfect English and rough humour, it is hard to match anywhere. I have not dared to play the fool, as he has, for two reasons. The first, that I could not play it so well; and the second, that I have no frightful tragedy to put before you to counterbalance it, as he had.'

Then he pulls himself up with the remark that it is time this rambling came to an end, and that he hopes he has not rambled too far and bored his reader, which, he admits naïvely, 'would be very unfortunate just now.'

It is difficult to resist the refreshing simplicity with which he takes the readers into his confidence, and it is not quite fair to the critic, who cannot but be disarmed by it. He will interrupt the narrative to remark that if this or that had been done, then that

or this would not have resulted; or that this 'is a crib from Sir E. B. L. B. L.'; or that a reference to *The Wild Huntsman* will stop all criticism at this point, while a further reference to *Faust* will show him to be in good company. When Charles Ravenshoe comes to say goodbye to sweet Mary Corby, Lady Hainault leaves the lovers together and goes out of the room to look for a missing blotting-book.

'And I intend to go after her, out of mere politeness, to help her to find it,' he tells you. 'I will not submit to be lectured for making an aposiopesis. If any think they could do this business better than I, let them communicate with the publishers, and finish the story for themselves. I decline to go into that drawing-room at present. I shall wander upstairs into my lady's chamber, after that goosey-gander Alwright, and see what she has done with the blotting-book.'

Or, again, he gives the following passage:

'When he said "Mary," in the old, old voice, there came such a rush of bygone times, bygone words, scenes, sounds, meetings and partings, sorrows and joys, into her wild, warm little heart, that with a low, loving and tender cry she ran to him and hid her face on his bosom.'

He mentions (in another of his delightful footnotes) that this paragraph from the word 'Mary' to the end, is an experiment, for, as a matter of curiosity, he tried to write it without using a single word from the Latin; that, after having taken all possible pains to do so, he found there were eight out of forty-eight; and that he does not think it possible to

reduce the proportion lower, and thinks it undesirable to reduce it so low.

All these asides are dangerous—they would be fatal in a lesser man—but who can resist the good-humoured fooling of a man of genius? And what are you to do with a man, who, after remarking that Charles Ravenshoe found the banisters at Ranford better than those at home for sliding down, for they were not so steep, and longer, explains that 'the best banisters for sliding down are broad oak ones with a rib in the middle. This new narrow sort, which are coming in, are wretched'; or who introduced Lord Palmerston with his umbrella on his shoulder, walking airily arm in arm with Lord John Russell? 'They were talking together; and, as they passed, Charles heard Lord Palmerston say that it was much warmer on this side of the street than on the other. With which proposition Lord John Russell appeared to agree; and so they passed on westward.' It seems as if the moment Henry Kingsley sat down to his desk—it is difficult to imagine him at *work*—he became like a boy out for a holiday. He was never afraid to joke, yet somehow his fun is never ill-timed nor his whimsical fancies out of place. There is no middle course to be adopted with his works; either yield to their fascination, or put them on the uppermost shelf and there for ever let them rest.

Henry Kingsley wrote tenderly of children, with whom he was always in sympathy; and quite affec-

tionately of men and women. His characters were very real to him, and rather than shake them by the hand and say farewell, he introduced them into other books. He loved or hated the men and women of his creation, according to whether they are good or bad, and always grew very angry with his bad people; for instance, after pronouncing the handsome, heartless Adelaide Summers worthless, he says, 'Let us have done with her. I can expand over good people, but I cannot over her.' In truth, but for the exigencies of his stories, he would have none but the most worthy folk. As it is, Adelaide is almost an exception, for there are few irreclaimable characters in his books. It looks at one time as if her husband, young Lord Welter, would turn out a terrible scoundrel, but blackguard as he is, he saves himself in the end, when, from a sense of honour, after a herculean struggle between right and wrong, he does that which he believes will cost him a legacy of half a million sterling. Even George Hawker, who seems lost and beyond hope, before he is led out to execution, being carried back in imagination to his old school-days, shows that there were good points in his character, and some good feeling which under other circumstances might in his youth have brought him to another end. 'There is a spark of the Divine in the worst of men, if you can only find it,' says our author, who believes that the only unpardonable crime is heartlessness.

Indeed Henry Kingsley is not happy except when he is dealing with his good folk, and them he treats with an exquisite loving-kindness. The Buckleys are depicted so as to secure affection forthwith, and there is a pretty little story of Mrs. James Buckley and her father at Clere waiting for news of the battle of Waterloo, in which James's regiment is engaged. At last an orderly comes from Portsmouth with a letter for the old man, and, while a maid goes to open the door, the wife asks at the window what has happened. 'A great victory, my dear,' said the man, mistaking her for one of the servants. 'Your master is all right. There's a letter from him inside this one.' '"And I dare say," Mrs. Buckley would add, when she would tell this old Waterloo story, as we called it, "that the orderly thought me a most heartless domestic, for when I heard what he said, I burst out laughing so loud, that old Mr. Buckley woke up to see what was the matter, and when he heard he laughed as loud as I did."' The author is obviously interested in beautiful, wilful, passionate Mary Thornton, who runs away with George Hawker, who marries her only for her money; and he is in love with her aunt, the ex-governess, who, when Mary returns with her child, runs forward, laughing wildly, and hugs the prodigal to her honest heart: 'My darling! My own darling! I knew she would find her home at last. In trouble and in sorrow I told her where she was to come. Oh, happy trouble that has

brought our darling back to us!' Lifelike is the weak old vicar, who tries vainly to control his headstrong daughter; and so, too, is the Rev. Frank Maberly, who comes to his new parish for the first time, having run the last four miles of his journey in twenty-one minutes. But no man out of a book ever talked like Maberly, and it is a shame to make such a manly fellow talk like a prig, for that was the last thing in the world he was. This is the fault of *Geoffrey Hamlyn*: that, while the characters are real, their conversation is impossibly stilted; and this grave defect is the more astonishing because there is not a trace of it in his other books.

The first part of *Geoffrey Hamlyn* takes place in England; the second in the Australian Bush, where *all* the characters of the first part come, absolutely without exception—Hamlyn, the narrator; clever, handsome, good-tempered, reliable James Stockbridge, who is quite shamefaced when he discovers that he is no longer in love with Mary; the Thorntons, Maberly, the Brentwoods, and the Buckleys, Tom Troubridge, and the rest—country gentlemen, clergymen, farmers, ex-convicts, labourers—not forgetting the villain of the story, George Hawker, who reappears as the famous Touan. Still, it does not really matter that it is improbable, it does not really matter that, according to the law of probability, it must be some millions to one against all these people coming to the same spot some three hundred and

fifty miles south of Sydney, for the interest is so well sustained that the coincidence is not very distressing. Kingsley, who knew the bush-life well, is in his element in the chapters descriptive of it. There are alarums and excursions arising out of an attack by bushrangers, and a tragedy—that of George Hawker, in ignorance of the lad's identity, shooting his own son—and Kingsley, who loved to dally by the way, shows, when the storm bursts, when the crisis comes, that he can gather himself together and carry all before him in a breathless narrative.

Perhaps the figure that stands out best is Madge, the wild gipsy woman, whom old Hawker turns out of doors for aiding and abetting his son to deceive him. The Buckleys give her shelter for the night, and she shows her gratitude at her departure, when, with hand raised, she stands in front of the door, and in the grand, patriarchal manner, pronounces a blessing:

'The blessing of God shall be upon the house of the Buckleys, and more especially upon you and your husband, and the boy that is sleeping inside. He shall be a brave and a good man, and his wife shall be the fairest and best in the country-side. Your kine shall cover the plains until no man can number them, and your sheep shall be like the sands of the sea. When misfortune and death and murder fall upon your neighbours, you shall stand between the dead and the living, and the troubles that pass over your heads shall be like the shadow of the light clouds that fly across the moor on a sunny day. And when in your ripe and honoured old age you shall sit with your husband in a garden of your own

planting, in the lands far away, and see your grandchildren playing around you, you shall think of the words of the wild, lost gipsy woman, who gave you her best blessing before she went away and was seen no more.'

A very different character is Mr. Secretary Pollifex, who is undoubtedly drawn from life. A shrewd man of the world, with a dry humour that is most amusing. When Captain Blockstrop of H.M.S. *Tartar* invites him to land at the small Australian settlement, he declines.

'Not if I know it, sir, with pork chops for breakfast in the cabin. Blockstrop, have you duly reflected what you are about to do? You are about to land alone, unarmed, unprovisioned, among the off-scourings of white society, scarcely superior in their habits to the nomadic savages they have unjustly displaced. Pause and reflect, my dear fellow. What guarantee have you that they will not propose to feed you on damper, or some other nameless abomination of the same sort?'

Later, however, he does land, and thus in feigned indignation addresses the Captain:

'A failure, sir? Burnt, sir! Disgracefully burnt up to a cinder, sir! I have been consulting the honourable member of the Cross-jack-yard as to the propriety of calling a court-martial on the cook's mate. He informs me that such a course is not usual in naval jurisprudence. I am, however, of opinion that in one of the civil courts of the colony an action for damages would lie.'

Besides *Geoffrey Hamlyn*, Henry Kingsley wrote a dozen novels, of which the best known are *Ravenshoe*; *The Hillyars and the Burtons*, a fine study of two

English families of different degrees; *Mademoiselle Mathilde*, a story of the French Revolution into which are introduced Marat, Robespierre, Camille Desmoulins, and other personages of the period; *Stretton*, where part of the action takes place in India at the time of the Mutiny; *Silcote of Silcotes*, a tale of English country life; *Valentin*, a story of Sedan, based upon the experiences of the writer, who was present at the battle and claimed to be the first Englishman to enter Metz; and *The Grange Garden*, than which Mr. Clement Shorter thinks it would be impossible to conceive a worse novel written by an author of distinction.

Ravenshoe is acclaimed by many as the masterpiece of Henry Kingsley, and at worst it is typical of him at his best. It is only necessary to read the first few pages to discover that the author is a consummate craftsman, for the book opens with a delightfully humorous account of the House of Ravenshoe, written with as complete a mastery of the subject as if the records of the family had been studied at the Herald's Office. The story centres round Charles, who is said to be William, not Charles, having been changed at birth, and who, when many years later he learns of the imposture, in spite of relatives and friends, goes out into the world, away from everybody he knows, becomes under an assumed name a groom, and, when his identity leaks out, enlists and goes with his regiment to the Crimea, where he is one of the six

hundred of the Light Brigade which made the famous charge. Although, like another great writer of fiction, Kingsley does not claim to rank among the military novelists, believing 'our place is with the non-combatants: when the decks are cleared for action we go below and wait meekly,' yet he finds himself in the midst of the battlefield at Balaclava. His description of that fierce struggle is stirring, and the passage with which he concludes is beautiful.

'Oh, but the sabres bit deep that autumn afternoon! There were women in Minsk, in Moglef, in Tohernigof, in Jitenier, in Polemva, whose husbands were Hussars—and women in Taganrog, in Tcherkask, in Aarepta, which lies under the pleasant slate mountains, whose husbands and sons were Cossacks—who were made widows that day. For that day's work there was weeping in reed-thatched hovels of the Don, and the mud-built shanties of the Dnieper. For the 17th Lancers, the Scots-Greys, the 1st Royals, and the 6th Enniskillens—"these terrible beef-fed islanders" (to use the words of the *Northern Bee*)—were upon them; and Volnyia and Hampshire, Renfrewshire and Grodno, Podolia and Fermanagh, were mixed together in one common ruin. Still, they say, the Princess Petrovitch, on certain days, leaves her carriage, and walks a mile through the snow barefoot, into Alexandroski, in memory of her light-haired handsome young son, whom Hornby slew at Balaclava. And I myself know the place where Lady Allerton makes her pilgrimage for those two merry boys of hers who lie out on the Crimean hill. Alas! not side by side. Up and down, in all weathers, along a certain gravel walk, where the chalk brook, having flooded the park with its dammed-up waters, comes foaming and spouting over a cascade, and hurries past the smooth-mown lawns of the pleasance. In the very place where she stood when the

second letter came. And there, they say, she will walk at times, until her beauty and her strength are gone, and her limbs refuse to carry her.'

The author regarded *Ravenshoe* with much affection. 'Of all the ghosts of old friends which I have called up in this quaint trade, the writing of fiction, only two remain and never quit me. The others come and go, and I love them well enough; but the two who are with me always are the peaked-faced man Charles Ravenshoe, and the lame French girl Mathilde.' And well may he be proud of Charles—who, it may here be divulged, is proved after all to be the eldest son of his father by an earlier and a secret marriage—for he is a gentleman to his finger-tips, a high-spirited, brave, loyal lad, beloved by all. But the hero is only one of a magnificent gallery of characters. Allusion has already been made to Mary Corby, to Adelaide, and to Lord Welter, a scion of the great house of Ascot which 'for many generations had given themselves up entirely to sport—so much so, that their marriages with other houses have been to a certain extent influenced by it.' The priest-ridden family at Ravenshoe is well depicted. Densil, the father, who rebels in his youth, but in spite of all his efforts, cannot escape from the influence; and Cuthbert, Charles's brother, who all too soon realises the worthlessness of the world and devotes himself to books and religious influences. The priests are even more

realistically portrayed. There is the simple-minded Father Clifford, and Father Tiernay, the jovial Irishman, and jesuitical Father Mackworth. It is the last-mentioned who is the great character. It is his object in life to keep the Ravenshoe family faithful to the Church of Rome, and he thinks no design wrong that assists him in his endeavour. He throws away a fortune so as to keep the House from falling into the hands of the Protestant Church. He is harsh, cruel even, yet cannot withhold his affections from the gentle Cuthbert; and there is nothing in the book more exquisite than the incident of the drowning of the latter.

'The surf still gently playing with the sand, the sea changing from purple to grey, and from grey to black, under the fading twilight. The tide sweeping westward towards the tall black headland, towards the slender-curved thread of the new moon, which grew more brilliant as the sun dipped to his rest in the red Atlantic. Groups of fishermen and sea boys and servants, that followed the ebbing tide as it went westward, peering into the crisping surf to see something they knew was there. One group that paused among the tumbled boulders on the edge of the retreating surges, under the dark promontory, and bent over something which lay at their feet. The naked corpse of a young man, calm and beautiful in death, lying quiet and still between two rocks, softly pillowed on a bed of green and purple seaweed. And a priest that stood upon the shore cried wildly to the four winds of Heaven, "Oh, my God, I loved him! My God! my God! I loved Him!"'

Not a whit inferior to the priests are the great aristocrats, Lord Hainault, 'one of the best fellows

in the world, but he would always talk as if he was in the House of Lords'; wonderful old Lady Ascot, and Lord Saltire, the most splendidly conceived of all the characters that Henry Kingsley ever drew. Lord Saltire is, to use the parlance of the theatre, the 'star'; and when he is on the stage, although not always germane to the story, he is invariably the centre of attraction. He is an old dandy of the Radical Atheist set that flourished in the Regency, when those famous high-bred exquisites, Petersham, Sefton, and the witty Alvanley led the fashion—a gentleman as fine as ever Bulwer Lytton dreamt of or as George Meredith has depicted. In his youth a *roué* and a gambler with whom no man might play piquet and win, he yet contrived, while indulging in all the extravagances of his time, to keep his heart tender and pure. He had a merry wit which he was not afraid to use, as when he wants immediately a detective to search for Charles: 'Go to Scotland Yard; give my compliments to Inspector Field; tell him a horrible murder has been committed, accompanied by arson, forgery, and regrating, with a strong suspicion of sorning, and that he must come at once'; or, again, when he addressed young Marston: 'His young friend's father had not been a brilliant scholar, as my young friend was; but had been one of the finest whist players in England. His young friend had turned his attention to scholastic honours in preference to whist, which

might or might not be a mistake.' Lord Saltire had had a son who was killed at an early age in a duel; and the memory of the poor lad was fresh in the old man's true heart, as fresh to the end, as it was on the morning forty years earlier when he came out of his dressing-room and met them carrying the corpse upstairs. But it was only one or two of his intimates who knew of this, for he rarely spoke of his son, and when he did it was generally in a cynical manner, under cover of which he was able to disguise the pain he still endured when the name was mentioned. Thus:

'"I should like to have had a son like you, but it was not to be. I had a son who was all that could be desired by the most fastidious person brought up in a far better school than mine; but he got shot in his first duel, at one-and-twenty. I remember to have been considerably annoyed at the time," continued the old gentleman, taking a pinch of snuff, and looking steadily at Charles without moving a muscle, "but I dare say it was all for the best. He might have run into debt, or married a woman with red hair, or fifty things. Well, I wish you good day, and beg your forgiveness once more for the liberty I have taken."'

Simplicity is the keynote of all the works of Henry Kingsley. His pathos is as simple as his humour, yet such was his command of both that he could at will create laughter or cause a tear to well to the eye. He could be as tender as a mother, as gentle as a dove. He had a love for things of beauty, and a poet's eye for nature, which showed itself in his

many admirable descriptive passages. He could depict the glories of the Thames Valley with as true a hand as he could paint those of the bush; and he was as much at home in sketching the society of an English drawing-room as in portraying the life of the early Australian settlers. There is no novelist with whom, in his entirety, he can be compared, though he had something of Lever's high spirits, and a love of his fellows as great as that of Charles Reade. There can be no doubt that the whirligig of time, which brings with it compensation as well as revenge, will put the works of this greatly gifted writer into a foremost place in the ranks of English novelists.

MRS. OLIPHANT

THE enormous literary output of Bulwer-Lytton and Anthony Trollope, the most prolific of notable English authors of the nineteenth century, pales into comparative insignificance before that of Mrs. Oliphant, who in forty-eight years produced no less than one hundred and eighteen works, many of them necessitating considerable research, besides innumerable papers in *Blackwood's Magazine* as yet uncollected. She wrote many biographies. 'I like biographies,' she told Miss Blackwood, 'I have a great mind to set up that as my future trade and tout for orders. Do you know any one that wants his or her life taken? Don't fail to recommend me if you do.' She wrote the lives of such different persons as Edward Irving, Thomas Chalmers, Francis of Assisi, Count de Montalembert, John Tulloch, Laurence and Alice Oliphant, and Jeanne D'Arc; appreciations of Cervantes, Dante, Molière, Sheridan, and the Brontës; literary histories of the Georgian and Victorian eras; biographical-topographical works on the Makers of Florence, Venice, and Modern Rome; books on Jerusalem and Edinburgh; historical sketches of the reigns of Anne and the second

George; and the annals of the great publishing house of Blackwood. And, in addition to these, which would be a sufficient life-work for another, she wrote ninety-eight novels!

It is highly improbable that there is any person living who has read these six-score works, which were published in two hundred and twenty-one volumes, would occupy some nine yards of shelf-room, and would require the undivided attention of a diligent reader for at least a year. The authoress realised this, and was well aware that her amazing literary fecundity was detrimental to her fame, for when Blackwood told her that Kinglake had expressed his appreciation of her work: 'How very good of Mr. Kinglake to interest himself about the poor little reputation which, alas! "thae muving things ca'ed weans" have forced me to be careless about,' she replied. 'I think, though, if ever the time comes that I can lie on my oars, after the boys are out in the world, or when the time comes, which there is no doubt about, when I shall be out of the world, that I will get a little credit—but not much now, there is so much of me.' There is pathos in this lament of a woman who, to support herself and her fatherless children, had to keep her nose to the grindstone in this fashion.

Her literary career began in 1849 with *Passages in the Life of Mrs. Margaret Maitland*, the Scottish dialect of which deters so many from embarking

upon the perusal of the story. 'Nothing half so true or so touching (in the delineation of Scottish character),' Jeffrey wrote to her, 'has appeared since Galt published his *Annals of the Parish*—and this is purer and deeper than Galt, and even more absolutely and simply true.' Mrs. Oliphant was well acquainted with the matters of which she wrote, for her parents were deeply interested in the Scottish Free Church movement, and as a very young girl she heard many discussions on the subject. Many years later she expressed regret for 'its foolish little polemics,' but it is a wonderful book to have been written by an authoress of one-and-twenty. After the still-born *Caleb Field* came *The Memoirs and Resolutions of Adam Graeme of Mossgray*, another story of the kailyard, so good that it would be unkind to compare with it the works of the modern Scottish school.

In rapid succession followed some sixteen more novels, the best of which, perhaps, were *Katie Stewart*, a tale of the Pretender; and *Harry Muir*, a story of Scottish life; but these did nothing to enhance her reputation, and for many years the general opinion was that she had never done better than her first book. It was not until 1862 that with *The Chronicles of Carlingford* she rose into something closely approaching fame. She refers to it in her *Autobiography*, 'a series pretty well forgotten now, which made a considerable stir at the time, and

almost made me one of the popularities of literature. Almost, never quite, though *Salem Chapel* really went very near it, I believe.' These *Chronicles*, which comprise *Salem Chapel* (1863), *The Rector and the Doctor's Family* (1863), *The Perpetual Curate* (1864), and *Miss Marjoribanks* (1866)—ten years after the publication of the last appeared *Phœbe, Junior: A Last Chronicle of Carlingford* — were published anonymously, and generally attributed to George Eliot, who, having already issued *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Romola*, was then at the zenith of her fame. This greatly displeased Mrs. Oliphant, who complained that it was 'a high compliment to me, no doubt; but women, you know, according to the best authorities, never admire each other, and I mean to protest that the faintest idea of imitating or attempting to rival the author of *Adam Bede* never entered my mind.' What George Eliot thought has not been divulged, but she need not have been annoyed, for all the *Chronicles* are delightful, though perhaps the best are *Salem Chapel* and *Miss Marjoribanks*.

Salem Chapel treats of the dissenting circles of Carlingford. 'As a matter of fact I knew nothing about chapels,' the authoress declared, 'but took the sentiment and a few details from our old church in Liverpool, which was Free Church of Scotland, and where there were a few grocers and other such folk whose ways with the minister were wonderful

to behold.' Most humorously are depicted the troubles of the high-spirited, though slightly priggish, young minister, Arthur Vincent, who, immediately after his installation, is depressed by the discovery of the necessity to stand well with his deacons. He does his best to humour them, accepts invitations to their wives' tea-parties and such social functions; but finds it difficult to accept an uneducated though well-meaning butterman, who is intent upon the letting of the sittings, as guide, philosopher, and friend. His first blow comes when Tozer's daughter Phœbe, who at once set her cap at him, brings him, from her mother, 'some jelly—nothing worth mentioning—only a shape that was over from supper last night.' It was so obviously meant as a kindness there was nothing to do but accept the present. 'It was a trifling circumstance, certainly; but just when an enthusiastic comrade writes to you about the advance of a glorious cause, and your own high vocation as a soldier of the Cross, and the undoubted fact that the hope of England is in you, to have a shape of jelly, left over from last night's tea-party, sent across with complacent kindness, for your refreshment. . . .!!'

Quite soon Vincent came into conflict with his office-bearers, who resented his independence, and even at the start trouble was only averted by the valiant effort of Tozer, the butterman, who represented to his brother-managers of the chapel that it

would be worse than absurd to lose a man whose eloquence was drawing all Carlingford to the little place of worship that had never before been so well attended. For the moment open unpleasantness was thus avoided, but jealousies shown on one side and the other made Vincent first a sad and then an angry man. He would not choose his acquaintances at the order of the deacons; the blunt promise of another fifty pounds a year drove him almost to madness; and altogether he realised to the full the discomforts of the minister whose living depended solely upon the caprice of his flock. He held his standard aloft, and would not defer to his underbred masters. A crisis would have arisen long before it did, but that these were proud of him, for he was an admirable, indeed a splendid, preacher, and the sittings were in great demand—which things gave them pause.

How proud was Tozer when young Vincent, whom he regarded as his *protégé*, at the tea-meeting in Salem Chapel, spoke after amusing, agreeable, complimentary Mr. Raffles.

'The speech was the strangest that ever was listened to at a tea-party. It was the wayward, capricious pouring forth of a fanciful young mind under an unquiet influence, having no connection whatever with the "object," the place or the listeners. The consequence was that it was listened to with breathless interest—that the faces grew pale and the eyes bright, and shivers of restrained emotion ran through the astonished audience. Mr. Vincent perceived the effect of

his eloquence, as a nursery story-teller perceives the rising sob of her little hearers. When he saw it, he awoke, as the same nursery minstrel does sometimes, to feel how unreal was the sentiment in his own breast which had produced this genuine feeling in others, and with a sudden amusement proceeded to deepen his colours and make bolder strokes of effect. His success was perfect; before he concluded, he had in imagination dismissed the harmless Salem people out of their very innocent recreation to the dark streets which thrilled round them—to the world of unknown life, of which each man for himself had some knowledge—to the tragedies that might be going on side by side with them, for aught they knew. His hearers drew a long breath when it was over. They were startled, frightened, enchanted. If they had been witnessing a melodrama, they scarcely could have been more excited. He had put the most dreadful suggestions in their mind of all sorts of possible trouble; he sat down with the consciousness of having done his duty by Salem for this night at least.'

But not even the unprecedented popularity of the chapel could in the long run make amends for what the simple people regarded as slights, and a meeting was called at which the narrow-minded Pigeon, at whose house Vincent would not visit, proposed what was equivalent to a vote of censure. Tozer opposed the motion, and converted what was meant to be disgrace into a tremendous triumph; and if the minister would have accepted as a peace-offering an additional fifty pounds of salary, a piece of plate, a congregational ovation—why, they awaited his acceptance. But Vincent would not hear reason—as they understood reason. He was done with them for good

and all, and this he told the astonished congregation in an ironical address.

'I am going to leave Carlingford. It was you who elected me, it is you who have censured me, it was you last night who consented to look over my faults and give me a new trial. I am one of those who have boasted in my day that I have received my title to ordination from no bishop, from no temporal provision, from no traditionary church, but from the hands of the people. Perhaps I am less sure than I was at first, when you were all disposed to praise me, that the voice of the people is the voice of God; but, however that may be, what I received from you I can but render up to you. I resign into your hands your pulpit, which you have erected with your money, and hold as your property. I cannot hold it as your vassal. If there is any truth in the old phrase which calls a church a cure of souls, it is certain that no cure of souls can be delegated to a preacher by the souls themselves who are to be his care. I find my old theories inadequate to the position in which I find myself, and all I can do is to give up the post where they have left me in the lurch. I am either your servant, responsible to you, or God's servant, responsible to Him—which is it? I cannot tell; but no man can serve two masters, as you know. Many of you have been kind to me—chief among all, my friend here (Tozer), who has spared no pains either to make me such a pastor as you wished, or to content me with that place when he had secured it. I cannot be content. It is no longer possible. So there remains nothing but to say goodbye—goodbye!—farewell! I will see you again to say it more formally. I only wish you to understand now that this is the decision I have come to, and that I consider myself no longer the minister of Salem from this night.'

All through the earlier chapters of *Salem Chapel* there is the feeling that a storm is coming, and,

though it is long delayed, there is never a dull page, nor a moment's tedium. The local colour is excellent, the character-drawing delightful. The butterman, the dairyman, and the other tradespeople, with their families; Tufton, whom Vincent succeeded as pastor of Salem Chapel, and his daughter Adelaide with her wonderful powers of deduction; the mysterious Mrs. Hilyard, always amused, always calm, always the *grande dame* even when stitching rough stuff for a few pence an hour, each and all are very real. But the gem of the book is the Jesuitical, indomitable Mrs. Vincent, who holds up her son's standard at Carlingford and turns the tables on his adversaries. But suddenly there comes a change in the character of the book, and, from a scene of parochial squabbles, the reader is plunged into drama hot and strong, with stormy interviews, threats of murder, abduction, and revolver-shooting. This part of the tale is carefully built up, and it arises naturally—if one be unsophisticated enough not to cavil at a superabundance of coincidence. There are thrills in the narrative—especially when a train steams out of a station conveying in different compartments a man and his wife sworn to murder him. But good as it is, this is not the portion of the story that has made the book famous, and it is a relief when, towards the end, there is a return to the atmosphere of the opening chapters.

It is a moot point whether *Miss Marjoribanks* is not a better book even than *Salem Chapel*. There

is less action, but the character-drawing is more incisive, and wit and humour much more in evidence. It is the fourth volume of *The Chronicles of Carlingford*, but in point of time it comes before *Salem Chapel*, the period being prior to the advent of Arthur Vincent to the pastorship of the dissenting community. *Miss Marjoribanks* opens with the death of Mrs. Marjoribanks, whereupon her daughter, at the age of fifteen, returns from school to the parental roof full of the idea of being 'a comfort to poor papa.' The theory was excellent, but in practice she merely made herself troublesome to the Doctor and his household; and indeed she was not quite happy in her attempts.

'It was May, and the weather was warm for the season; but Lucilla had caused the fire to be lighted in the large gloomy library where Dr. Marjoribanks always sat in the evenings, with the idea that it would be a "comfort" to him; and, for the same reason, she had ordered tea to be served there, instead of the dinner, for which her father, as she imagined, could have little appetite. When the Doctor went in to his favourite seclusion, tired and heated and sad—for even on the day of his wife's funeral the favourite doctor of Carlingford had patients to think of—the very heaviness of his thoughts gave warmth to his indignation. He had longed for the quiet and the coolness and the solitude of his library apart from everybody; and when he found it radiant with firelight, tea set on the table, and Lucilla crying by the fire, in her new crape, the effect upon a temper by no means perfect may be imagined. The unfortunate man threw both the windows wide open and rang the bell violently, and gave instant orders for the removal of the unnecessary fire and the tea-service. "Let me know when dinner is ready," he said, in a

voice like thunder, "and if Miss Marjoribanks wants a fire, let it be lighted in the drawing-room!"'

Thus rebuffed, Lucilla suffered in silence; and, sent back to school, studied political economy, thinking in the pursuit of that science to derive knowledge that would in later days enable her to manage a household. Returning home 'for good' some years later, she still retained the belief that it was her duty to be 'a comfort to poor papa,' who, alas! came to regard her, not as a comfort, but as a new and unexpected embarrassment, and was anything but delighted by the enthusiasm of her filial devotion. The fates were good to her, however, and the path was made very easy. On the morning of her return she seated herself at the foot of the breakfast-table, in the place which her father usually occupied himself, before the urn and the coffee-pot. The Doctor let this pass; and so, without at the time realising it, he had taken the first step towards the abdication of his position as the head of the house. *Facilis descensus Averni.* In a few weeks his authority had—gently enough, it is true—been wrested from him.

Lucilla was determined to take the lead in Carlingford society, and with this object in view she refurnished the drawing-room—'I think I have enough complexion at present to venture upon a pale green'—and inaugurated a series of 'Evenings.' She was determined to make her receptions agreeable, and for this she sought to mingle with the aristocratic Grange

Lane folk, a sprinkling of persons hitherto regarded as outside the pale of Carlingford fashion. Her generalship was superb, and success crowned the efforts of the girl, who calmly announced that she would marry in ten years, when she would be twenty-nine, and 'I shall be going off a little.' She ruled for many years the little town—not as a despot, indeed, but with the goodwill and co-operation of the lesser powers, for she was a disciple of Bentham, striving to accomplish the greatest good of the greatest number, and, incidentally, regarding herself as a benefactress of the human race. Her victorious march was interrupted only by her love-affairs, in which, it must be admitted, she was not fortunate. Her cousin, the good-natured, clumsy, adoring Tom, she would not have; Cavendish, to whom her heart inclined, left her for another; and Archdeacon Beverley, at the crucial moment, discovered in the village schoolmistress the woman whom he had always loved. But the loss of these admirers, which, occurring to another, would have appeared humiliating, she contrived to turn into a triumph, and in the case of Cavendish, by her magnanimity and a show of indifference, made it reflect glory on her.

The interest of this delightful book is sustained throughout. The authoress has depicted admirably the masterful Lucilla, who had no sense of humour, and admitted this defect so proudly that its absence was in her mistaken for a merit; who was so generous

that, after refurnishing the drawing-room, she felt to marry before ten years had passed would be to 'swindle' that papa whom she had vowed to comfort—at any cost to his convenience; and who in the end succumbed to Tom, who, returning unexpectedly to England, carried her by storm. From first to last, in a tone of good-humoured banter, her creator pokes fun at the heroine. 'As for what you say of hardness of tone, I am afraid it was scarcely to be avoided,' Mrs. Oliphant defended herself in a letter to a critic.

'I hate myself the cold-blooded school of novel-writing, in which one works out a character without the slightest regard to whether it is good or bad, or whether it touches or revolts one's sympathies. But at the same time I have a weakness for Lucilla, and to bring a sudden change upon her character and break her down into tenderness would be like one of Dickens's maudlin repentances, when he makes Mr. Dombey *tringuer* with Captain Cuttle. Miss M. must be one and indivisible, and I feel pretty sure that my plan is right. It is the middle of the story that is always the trying bit—the two ends can generally take care of themselves.'

But if Lucilla is the gem of the book, some of the other persons are scarcely less worthy of praise. The Doctor, who hates to be 'managed,' yet is too much amused by his daughter's efforts, seriously to combat them; the good-hearted Nancy; Mrs. Woodburn, the inimitable mimic, who can never refrain from the exercise of her powers; Mrs. Chiley, who thinks all artists adventurers; the well-bred Rose Lake, the

drawing-master's daughter, proud of being an artist, and regarding an artist as the equal of anybody and the superior of most—simple, loyal little Rose, who sacrifices her career to look after her young sisters and brothers; and Barbara Lake, the wayward, passionate, vain girl who sets herself out to attract Cavendish, and, while succeeding in detaching from him Lucilla, loses him in the end. Barbara's behaviour is scandalous, and Rose is furious when, coming with her father one afternoon, she finds Barbara entertaining her lover.

'"It means, papa, that she has encouraged him to come, and invited him in, and been singing to him." Rose turned on her when the visitor had departed. "To think she should be one of us, and have no proper pride! If he was fond of her, he would tell her so, and ask your permission; but she is laying herself out to please *him*, and is content that they should all jeer at her at Lucilla's parties, and say she is trying to catch him. I thought I could have died of shame when I saw him here to-night; and compromising you, as if that was why you were so civil. If it were for her good, do you think *I* would ever interfere?"'

There is much wit in the book, and some amusing passages, as when 'I never was accused before of saying anything profoundly true,' Colonel Chiley said, and he grew pale, 'I didn't mean it, I'm sure, if that is any justification'; and the conclusion of the highly respectable Archdeacon's wooing: 'I'll tell you what we must do, Helen. We must go back to Basing together, you and I. I don't see the good of leaving

you by yourself here. You can make what alterations you like when you get to the Rectory; and I shall let that—that person alone, if you wish it, with his ill-gotten gain. He will never come to any good,' said the Archdeacon, with some satisfaction; and then he added in a parenthesis as if she had expressed some ridiculous doubt on the subject, '*Of course I mean that we should be married before we go away.*'

Delightful, too, is *Old Mr. Tredgold*, the tale of a blasphemous old retired money-lender, who loves his younger daughter, the objectionable, spoilt, selfish, pretty Stella, and ignores his elder girl, the charming Katherine. Stella may do anything she desires, but marry unprofitably; and the book is memorable chiefly for one most amusing scene, when Sir Charles Somers presents himself as her suitor.

'"Now, look here, Sir Charles, I don't know what your circumstances are, and they would be no business of mine, but for this that you've been telling me; you young fellows are not very often flush o' money, but you may have got it tied up, and that sort of thing. I don't give my daughter to any man as can't count down upon the table shillin' for shillin' with me." This he said very deliberately, with an emphasis on every word; then he made a pause, and, putting his hand in his pocket, produced a large handful of coins, which he proceeded to tell out in lines upon the table before him. Sir Charles watched him in consternation for a moment, and then with a sort of fascination followed his example. By some happy chance he had a quantity of change in his pocket. He began with perfect gravity to count it out on his side, coin after coin, in distinct rows. The room was quite silent, the

air only moved by the sound of a cinder falling now and then in the hearth, and the clink of the money as the two actors in this strange little drama went on with the greatest seriousness counting out coin after coin. "Don't seem to have as many as you," Sir Charles said. "Five short, by Jove!"'

The lover left, crestfallen, and related his adventure to his hostess.

'"Jove! Old beggar said shillin' for shillin'. Had a heap of silver—got it like a fool—didn't see what he was driving at—paid it out on the table—left it there, by Jove!—all my change!—not a blessed thrippenny to throw to little girl at gate.'

Sir Charles eloped with Stella, who had pretended to give him up for a *parure* of diamonds and many dresses. Her father was broken-hearted, but vindictive too, and never forgave either of them. He had his revenge on Sir Charles, however, for he never altered the will in which he made Stella his heiress, knowing the character of the girl, who, after coming into her fortune, promptly relegated her husband to the inferior position.

Mrs. Oliphant was sometimes drawn to write of the supernatural, and the best examples of her work in this field are *A Beleaguered City*, founded on a medieval legend of a city invested and occupied by the dead—this was her favourite tale of the occult; *A Little Pilgrim in the Unseen*; and *The Lady's Walk*, suggested to her by the story attaching to the old house of the Sacvilles in the neighbourhood of

Lowick, where there is a ghost, though about it, as Charlotte relates, 'there is no story—at least nothing tragical or even romantic. They say she was the eldest daughter. She lived here all her life, and had several generations to take care of. Oh no, there was no murder or wrong about our lady; she just loved Ellermore above everything; and my idea is that she has been allowed the care of us ever since. . . .' There is tragedy in the story—the suicide of a disgraced son of the quiet Scottish family, and its attendant pathos.

'"I think you are right, Chatty," Mr. Campbell says to his daughter, "I think you are right. I am not fit, in my shattered state, and with the information I have just received, to pay the attention I would like to pay. . . ." He paused, and looked at me fixedly. "It is a great trouble to me that we have never been able to show you proper attention, Mr. Temple. You see, my son was detained; and now he is dead, and I've never known it till this moment. You will excuse a reception which is not the kind of reception I would like to give you. You were my Colin's friend. You will know how to make allowances. Yes, my dear, I am best in my own chamber. I will just go, with Mr. Temple's permission—go—to my bed!"'

Throughout is a sad, weird note, an occasional thrill, and again excessive use of coincidence.

The book has many descriptive passages, and one of these may be given as showing Mrs. Oliphant's style, with its merits and its limitations, the vein of poetry fighting against a lack of distinction and an irritating repetition of words.

'It was a lovely evening, soft and warm, the western sky all ablaze with colour, the great branches of the beeches thrown out in dark maturity of greenness upon the flush of orange and crimson, melting into celestial rosy red as it rose higher, and flinging itself in frothy heaps across the serene blue above. The same wonderful colours glowed in reflection out of the loch. The air was of magical clearness, and earth and sky seemed stilled with an almost awe of their own loveliness, happiness, and peace.

> "The holy time was quiet as a nun
> Breathless with adoration."

For my part, however, I noticed this only in passing, being intent on other thoughts. From the loch there came a soft tumult of voices. It was Saturday evening, and all the boys were at home. They were getting out the boats for an evening row, and the white sail of the toy yacht rose upon the gleaming water like a little white cloud among the rosy clouds of that resplendent sky. I stood between two of the beeches that formed a sort of arch, and looked out upon them, distracted for an instant by the pleasant distant sound which came softly through the summer air. Next moment I turned sharply with a start, in spite of myself; turned quickly to see who it was coming after me. There was, I need not say, not a soul within sight. The beeches fluttered softly in the warm air; the cosy shadows of their great boles lay unbroken along the path; nothing else was visible, not even a bird on a bank. I stood breathless between the two trees, with my back turned to the loch, gazing at nothing, while the soft footsteps came quickly on, and passed me—passed me!—with a slight waft of air, I thought, such as a slight, light figure might have made; but that was imagination, perhaps. Imagination! Was it not all imagination? or what was it? No shadows or darkness to conceal a form by; full light of day radiant with colour; the most living, delightful air, all sweet with pleasure. I stood there speechless and without

power to move. *She* went along softly, without changing the gentle irregularity of her tread, to the end of the walk. The steps grew fainter as they went farther and farther from me. I never listened so intently in my life. I said to myself, "If they go out of hearing I shall know it is merely an excited imagination." And on they went, almost out of hearing, only the faintest touch upon the ground; then there was a momentary pause, and my heart stood still, but leaped again to my throat and sent wild waves of throbbing to my ears next moment: they had turned and were coming back.'

There are many who, remembering how keen was Mrs. Oliphant's humour and how fertile her imagination, inclined to the belief that, if she had not been so prolific, she might well have written a masterpiece. In favour of their contention, it must be granted that her method of working was much against her. She began *Caleb Field*, a tale about the plague in London, the very night she had finished *Margaret Maitland*. 'I had no table even to myself, much less a room to work in, but sat at the corner of the family table with my writing-book, with everything going on as if I had been making a shirt instead of writing a book,' with people around her talking, and herself from time to time joining in the conversation. When she was married she used the little back drawing-room, where she used to write all the morning, getting up now and then in the middle of a sentence to run downstairs and exchange a few words with her husband, or to play with the children; and it was not until 1888 that she ever had a 'den.'

I think the first time I ever secluded myself for my work was years after it had become my profession and sole dependence—when I was living after my widowhood in a relation's house, and withdrew with my book and my inkstand from the family drawing-room out of a little conscious ill-temper which made me feel guilty, notwithstanding that the retirement was so very justifiable! But I did not feel it to be so, neither did the companion from whom I withdrew.'

But against this is the undeniable fact that there is no rule for the composition of masterpieces. One is produced after years of labour, *Tom Jones* and *Vanity Fair* were written while the printer's devil was at the door; the slightest noise upset the train of Carlyle's thought, Anthony Trollope wrote *Barchester Towers* in railway carriages; one is written regularly, another spasmodically. Genius will out, and whether writing in haste or at leisure it tells; but equally, whether written in haste or at leisure, there can never be in the creation what in the creator is not. If Mrs. Oliphant had been less weary, if she had had more time, it is most probable her books would have been better than they were, and there would not have been so many signs of haste discernible in the later books. But though a writer of the first class must take pains to do himself justice, and may easily produce a book unworthy of him, yet no amount of pains taken by a writer of the second rank will place him or her among the masters. The leopard cannot change its spots, and all the world over talent is talent and genius is

genius, and never the twain shall meet. It is a statement harsh and cruel, but most undeniably true. Under no conceivable circumstances could Mrs. Oliphant have materially improved upon her best, say, *Salem Chapel* and *Miss Marjoribanks*.

'I am a writer very little given to explanation or to any personal appearance,' Mrs. Oliphant declared; and the only traces of the authoress are to be found in *The Thoughts of a Believer*, *The Verdict of Old Age*, and the preface to *The Ways of Life* entitled *On the Ebb-Tide*. She could not understand how Anthony Trollope could discuss the characters in his novels, and she was astonished beyond measure by his conversation. 'I am totally incapable of talking about anything I have ever done in that way,' she remarked. Nor, while constantly some real scene or incident gave birth to one of her stories, did she consciously introduce characters from life—though people often thought they recognised themselves. One exception there was, in *Zaidee*: 'Lance, the painter of fruits and flowers and still life . . . dared me to put him in a book, and I took him at his word, and did so, making a very artless representation, and using some of his own stories.'

Mrs. Oliphant wrote good, straightforward stories of upper and lower middle-class life, stories of flesh and blood, with humour and pathos; but too many of her productions, opening brilliantly, long before they were finished lost their hold on the reader. She

gossiped pleasantly about society in small county towns, in the Highlands, and in London; and, while her character-drawing was usually adequate, sometimes she produced a wonderful creation, such as Anna, in the little-read short story *Grove Road, Hampstead.* Indeed, Anna, with her back to the wall, fighting for an inheritance, using in the unequal struggle any weapons, however cruel, that came to her hand, sparing no one's feelings, is a figure that lingers in the memory. Much that Mrs. Oliphant has written will be, nay, is already, consigned to oblivion, but from the wreck there will surely be saved some half-dozen stories that deserve a place not far below Mrs. Gaskell and George Eliot, whose influence on her work is easily to be discerned.

JAMES PAYN

It is unfortunate for the reputation of the novelists of the last generation that they have been so greatly overshadowed by those of the thirty years which preceded them. Since the period when the founders of the modern school, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, were writing, there has been no time in the history of English fiction to compare with the palmy days of the art between 1840 and 1870, when Dickens and Thackeray, Lytton and Disraeli, Lever, the Brontës, George Eliot, Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, Henry Kingsley, and Anthony Trollope, were enriching our literature. It was scarcely to be expected that the last thirty years of the nineteenth century could produce a list that would vie with such a galaxy of talent. Indeed, it is a moot point whether, with the exception of George Meredith, the work of the best writers of the latter epoch is as good as that of the least of the authors just mentioned. Yet the output was not unworthy of consideration. Stevenson has left a definite mark, and Mrs. Oliphant with *Salem Chapel* and *Miss Marjoribanks* will not soon be forgotten, while *Lorna Doone* has already established itself as a classic; but can

Photo. Elliott & Fry.

JAMES PAYN.

it be said that the popularity of the works of, say, Besant and Rice, Black, and James Payn is likely to outlive their contemporaries? Agreeable writers all, yet will they be more than so many names in fifty years?

Though no one has claimed for James Payn that he was one of the masters of fiction, yet he had and still has many admirers. Dr. Robertson Nicoll has read all his four-score novels with enjoyment; and Mr. J. M. Barrie is enthusiastic. 'If I were an American millionaire and could afford to keep a novelist of my own, I would first offer the appointment to Mr. Payn,' the latter has written characteristically. 'No brighter, shrewder, manlier writer touches paper. His very name puts one in good humour like the sound of the dinner-gong.' Of all Payn's works, from *The Foster-Brother* (founded on his college experiences) in 1859 to the last book published shortly before his death, it may be said that there is not one that is unreadable. The stories are pleasant enough, the narrative usually runs smoothly, and, above all, the books are never depressing. He had a keen sense of humour, which indeed was sometimes too strong to be restrained, and occasionally it is obvious that when apparently most serious he was in reality laughing up his sleeve. Certainly he was not afraid to be amusing, and a typical example of his humour is to be found in the preface to *Lost Sir Massingberd*. After assuring

the reader that his book is *not* published in consequence of 'the warmly-expressed wishes of numerous friends,' he goes on to say that in these days, when every man and woman becomes an author on the least provocation, not to have written anything for the press is no small claim to be an original.

'Neither sex nor age seems to exempt from the universal passion for authorship. My niece, Jessie (*ætat.* sixteen), writes heartrending narratives for the *Liliputian Magazine*; her brother, whom I have always looked upon as a violent, healthy hobbledehoy, whose highest virtue was Endurance, and whose darkest experience was Skittles, produces the most thrilling romances for the *Home Companion*. Even my housekeeper makes no secret of forwarding her most admired receipts to the *Family Intelligencer*; while my stable-boy, it is well known, is a prominent poetical contributor to the *Turf Times*, having also the gift of prophecy with reference to the winner of all the racing events of any importance. And yet, I believe, my household is not more addicted to publication than those of my neighbours.'

He then proceeds to explain that he sets down the story because he is certain otherwise that sooner or later his nephew will do so for him, and very likely spoil it in the telling.

'He writes in a snappy, jerky, pyrotechnic style, which they tell me is now popular, but which is not suited to my old-fashioned taste; and although he dare not make at present what he calls "copy" of the stories with which I am, perhaps, too much accustomed to regale his ears, he keeps a note-book, and a new terror is added to death under that circumstance. When I am gone, he will publish my best things, under some

such title as *After-Dinner Tales*, I feel certain; and they will appear at the railway book-stalls in a yellow cover bordered with red, and with even a frontispiece displaying a counterfeit and libellous presentment of his departed relative in the very act of narration. The gem of that collection would undoubtedly be the story which I am now about to anticipate that very gentleman by relating myself.'

Lost Sir Massingberd is perhaps the best, as probably it is the most popular, of Payn's books. The story centres round a Georgian *roué*, who had played *écarté*—and lost—with Lord Thanet, that king among gamblers; had hobnobbed with the best—which was the worst—society of the day; and had at one time the invidious distinction of being regarded as a friend of 'The First Gentleman of Europe.' Wealthy as he was, he could not, however, spend guinea for guinea with a prince whose means were great and whose debts, by the grace of his creditors, enormous. Ruined, he returned to Fairburn Hall, an entailed estate of which he could not dispose; and there he lived, a lonely, miserable, terrible old man.

'His face evidently belonged to one who was used to command. On the forehead was a curious indented curve like the letter U, while his lips curled contemptuously upwards also, in somewhat the same shape. The two together gave him a weird, and, indeed, a demoniacal look, which his white beard, although long and flowing, had not enough of dignity to do away with. I had never heard Sir Massingberd's personal appearance described; but, even if I had not had before me his shrinking nephew, I should have recognised at once the features of Giant Despair.'

The nephew, Marmaduke Heath, the heir-presumptive to Fairburn Hall, was also the last-in-tail, and his death would place the property at the disposal of the bold bad baronet. Sir Massingberd, who, by the way, was under a strong suspicion of having robbed his brother of a fortune, was now desirous to rob that brother's son of his life, if the crime could be committed without detection. His first attempts were to frighten the fanciful, morbid lad out of his wits, by appearing suddenly at night in the latter's bedroom, by means of a secret staircase—quite the work for a character of the Radcliffian school. This failing, he jumped at the suggestion of the tutor that his charge should be allowed to ride, and straightway sent to London for a confirmed runaway, and made the young horseman go out with a snaffle-bridle, when, he felt sure, if what he desired came to pass, it would be put down to chance. Marmaduke was thrown and injured very severely; but the dastardly attempt to a certain extent recoiled upon the originator, for the lad's friends thereupon took the law into their own hands, and kept the ward from his guardian.

Why Sir Massingberd did not marry was a puzzle to his neighbours, but the reader is let into the secret. He had endeavoured to seduce a pretty gipsy, Sinnamenta, offering her marriage according to the rites of the nomad tribe, which, of course, would not have been binding upon him. Later, as

the gipsies had feared, he repudiated her, and then the head of the band sent for him, when ensued the following dramatic scene:

'"Massingberd Heath, I sent for you to tell you something which concerns both us and you. Many months ago, you came to us, uninvited and unwelcome, and elected to be a gipsy like ourselves. This makes you smile very scornfully; yet, if you did not mean the thing you said, you lied. However, we believed you. You were admitted into what, however wretched and debased it may seem to you, was our home, and all we had to offer you was at your service. You fell in love with that poor girl yonder, and she did not tremble at your voice, as now, but trusted to your honour. It is true, your position in the world was high, and hers was what you saw it to be. Still you wooed her, and not she you; that is so, and you know it. Do not slander her, sir, lest presently you should be sorry for it. Again and again, then, you demanded her hand in marriage—such marriage, that is, as prevails among our people—not so ceremonious, indeed, as with the rest of the world, but not less binding. This we would not grant, because we disbelieved your protestations on your honour and before your God; and disbelieved them, as it has turned out, with reason. Then we fled from you and your false solicitations to the north, hundreds of miles away: even thither you followed us, or else accidentally fell in with us; I know not which. You renewed your offers and your oaths. We found, all worthless as you are, that the poor girl loved you still, and, yielding to your repeated importunity, we suffered her to become your wife."

'"Wife!" repeated the renegade contemptuously. "Do you suppose, then, that I valued your gipsy mummeries at a pin's head? You might as well attempt to tie these wrists of mine with the gossamer from yonder furze."

'"We knew that, Massingberd Heath, although the girl did

not know it; she trusted you, although your every word was false."

'"She is fool enough for anything," returned the other brutally. "But I know all this. Have you dared to bring me here merely to repeat so stale a story?"

'"A story with an end you have yet to learn," pursued my uncle sternly. "You were wedded by no gipsy mummeries, as you call them: you took Sinnamenta Liversedge, in the presence of many persons, solemnly to wife."

'"Ay, and I might take her sister there, and marry her to-day after the same fashion, and no law could say me "nay."'

'"Yes, *here*, Massingberd Heath; but not at Kirk-Yetholm."

'"And why not?" inquired the ruffian, with a mocking laugh, that had, however, something shrill and wavering in it.

'"Because Kirk-Yetholm is over the Border, and, by the laws of Scotland, my niece Sinnamenta is your wife, proud man, and nothing but death can sever the bond!"'

Sir Massingberd's revenge was immediate. He took his wife away with him! He ill-treated her, he beat her even; and very pathetic are her subsequent appearances on the scene, until her people carried her away—a half-witted, prematurely aged woman. But the baronet was struck down in the midst of his crimes, and the manner of his death was in accordance with the curse pronounced solemnly upon him by Sinnamenta's sister, Rachel:

'May the lightning strike him in his wickedest hour! Nay, let him perish, inch by inch, within reach of the aid that shall never come, ere the God of the Poor takes Him into His hand!'

Of the other characters there is little to remark. Harvey Gerard, the agnostic, is a noble gentleman,

as Matthew Long is an excellent clergyman; while the love interest is confined to Peter Meredith, the narrator of the tale, Marmaduke, and pretty Lucy Gerard.

'The noble youths of *Lost Sir Massingberd* are noble at seventeen. Indeed, it is noticeable that Mr. Payn likes to catch his heroes and heroines young,' Mr. Barrie has remarked with whimsical humour. 'None over twenty need apply. I was reading *Less Black than We're Painted* lately, and found a hero and heroine engaged to be married—a serious affair in later life—at the age of sixteen and a half. When the story ends they are married at twenty-one—they have gone through every experience, they have settled down to spend the few remaining years of life quietly, a broken-down married man and woman of the world. If all Mr. Payn's heroes could be gathered together and a schoolmaster then introduced who said, "Gentlemen, we shall now resume our studies," the effect would no doubt be remarkable.'

Nearly as good as far as the plot goes, and much better as regards characterisation, is the almost equally popular *By Proxy*. The story is slight, but well constructed. Captain Conway and Ralph Pennicuick go for a tour in China, where the former is sentenced to death for stealing (out of devilment) a sacred stone, and the latter, a poor man, in order to benefit his wife (from whom he is estranged) and his daughter (whom he loved dearly) takes the place

of the condemned man for a sum of twenty thousand pounds. Pennicuick returns to England, but does not pay the money to the widow. Conway, however, has escaped the penalty, and returns, when justice is done. It is the characters that make the novel remarkable. Ralph Pennicuick is well depicted—a callous, selfish, miserly man of the world—an excellent contrast to his open-hearted son, in love with Nelly Conway. The Wardlows are an amusing couple, he with his love for auction-sales, she with her troubles because her husband *will* give her a fine house and a carriage. But the best character in the book is Mrs. Conway, whose standing protest is against the unsatisfactoriness of the world and its ways, who has driven her husband from her and cannot bear to hear a kind word about him, until she hears of his death, when she breaks down and cries bitterly because of 'the old times—the old times that were so short, because I turned my Arthur's heart to stone.'

Payn's mysteries are always well thought out, and his situations, often dramatic, are nearly always ingenious, although, of course, the chain of coincidence is strained unduly. The author was not averse, as it has been shown, to sensational plots, and he revelled in runaway matches—as in *Walter's Word*, secret marriages—as in the delightful *Canon's Ward*, reappearances of the (supposed) dead—as in *Bentinck's Tutor*, and similar simple, although effective, devices.

He once defended himself against the critics who pronounced his narratives improbable, impossible, or absurd, when he repeated the anecdote of the picture sale, where a carking *connoisseur* is abusing some picture. 'This fellow,' he cries, 'has even the audacity to attempt to paint a fly! *That* a fly, forsooth!' and he flips at it with contemptuous fingers. The fly flew away. *It was a real one!*

Like Dickens, under whose influence he fell to some extent, he rarely ended a story save with the success of the good young man and the discomfiture of the villain. The necessary amount of love-making is introduced into all the stories, as a matter of course; but Payn is happier when depicting society generally—at the university, in the country, in the Inns of Court, at a fashionable watering-place, or in the suburbs; and at his best when depicting the life of Bohemia, as in *Less Black than We're Painted*, *A Grape from a Thorn*, or *Walter's Word*. He was fond of anecdote, and by no means averse to digressions on all sorts and conditions of things, and his books are full of commonsense, and occasionally commonplace, apostrophes and reflections on Youth, Friendship, Love, Society, and a score of other subjects, abstract and concrete. He has pathos and humour. It is a pretty touch when he makes that heartless scoundrel, Reginald Selwyn, remark: 'I am not straitlaced in morals, but when it comes to religion that is quite a different thing. I am a

Church-and-King man, I am'; and when asked what that is, replies, a little taken aback: 'Well, a man that swears by the Thirty-nine Articles, and respects the law, sir—the game-laws, for instance. It is true I have neither read the one or the other, but I take 'em on trust. That's faith, my good sir; in which I am afraid you artist gentlemen are rather deficient.' On the whole Payn's men are better drawn than his women, who for the most part are merely pretty and simple and lovable, though he was not averse occasionally to the introduction of an adventuress such as Mrs. Sheldon. On the other hand, Sir Massingberd Heath is lifelike, and so too is Jack Pelter, the good-hearted cynic of thirty. The stories are written well enough, with an easy, though as a rule an undistinguished, style.

'I am told by an able friend, who is good enough to revise for me this manuscript, that it is not likely that the mere boy, as I then was, would have made such an observation as the above,' he makes the supposed narrator of *Lost Sir Massingberd* remark. 'I do not doubt that this remark is altogether just; but I am afraid it will apply to so much else in this narrative, that it is scarcely worth while to make an alteration. I am not used to literary composition; I cannot weigh whether this or that is characteristic of a speaker. I am merely a garrulous person, who has, however, such a striking story to tell, that I trust the matter will atone for the manner.'

Omitting the words, 'I am not used to literary composition,' the above may stand as a criticism of James Payn.

Photo. Russell & Sons.

SIR WALTER BESANT.

SIR WALTER BESANT

For an author, however humble, to sit down in cold blood to criticise the writings of Sir Walter Besant bears a terrible resemblance to the vulgar crime known as looking a gift horse in the mouth, for Besant has established an undying claim upon the regard of his fellow-workers, great and small alike, as the founder of the famous Society of Authors, which, whatever its opponents may say, has rendered yeoman's service on the business side to English men of letters of all ranks. 'It is hard to speak of him with measure when we consider the devotion to the cause of authors, and the constant good service rendered by him to their material labours,' Mr. George Meredith has written. 'He never missed an opportunity for acting as the young author's voluntary friend in the least sentimental or most sensible manner. He had no thought of trouble or personal loss where the welfare of his fellow-workers was concerned.'

Besant's thoughts did not at first incline to the profession of letters. Indeed, it was his intention to take orders, but at the eleventh hour, after his ordination was arranged, the truth was borne in

upon him that he was not called and chosen for the office of deacon in the Church of England. Instead, he accepted a professorship in Mauritius, where he remained until a succession of attacks of fever made it advisable to return to England, where in 1868 he accepted the paid secretaryship of the newly founded Palestine Exploration Fund. It is worthy of note that, in spite of his successes in literature, he did not feel justified in resigning this post until 1885—that is, three years after the publication of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, which placed him in the front rank of the most popular writers of the day.

The year in which Besant became associated with the Palestine Exploration Fund also witnessed the issue of his first book, *Studies in French Poetry*, which arose out of his reading in Mauritius. This work opened the reviews to him, and it was as a result of his contributions to *Once a Week* that he became acquainted with James Rice, the editor of that periodical. Rice, who was eight years younger than Besant, had at this time published one or two novels, and was engaged upon a new work of fiction, of which the first chapters were already written. He gave the manuscript to Besant to read, and, the latter approving of it, he suggested the since famous literary partnership, which for continuity and completeness has been compared with those of Beaumont and Fletcher and Erckmann and Chatrian. Beginning in 1871, it ceased only with

the death of Rice in 1882; and the ten years of collaboration resulted in a dozen novels, including *Ready-Money Mortiboy, My Little Girl, With Harp and Crown, This Son of Vulcan, The Golden Butterfly, The Monks of Thelema, By Celia's Arbour, The Chaplain of the Fleet,* and *The Seamy Side.*

Those who thought that Besant's *Autobiography* would throw some light upon the method of collaboration were doomed to disappointment.

'It is enough to state that we worked without disagreement; that there was never any partnership between us in the ordinary sense of the word; but that the collaboration went on from one story to another always without any binding conditions, always liable to be discontinued; while each man carried on his own independent literary work, and was free to write fiction, if he pleased, by himself.'

However, Besant relented to some slight extent.

'Now that Rice is dead it is impossible for me to lay hands upon any passage or page and to say, "This belongs to Rice—this is mine." There are, however, some parts in our joint work which, without injustice to him or myself, I may fairly assign to one or the other. In *Ready-Money Mortiboy,* the plot and the origin and the conception were his; the whole of the part concerned with the county town and the bank is his. On the other hand, in the story called *By Celia's Arbour* the whole of the local part, that which belongs to Portsmouth, is my own. I was born in the place, which Rice never, to my knowledge, even saw. On the other hand, there are many parts of all the stories, in which our rambles about London, and conversations over these rambles, suggested situations, plots, and characters, which it would be impossible to assign to either. Of *The Golden Butterfly,* the thing itself was seen

by my brother, Mr. Edgar Besant, in Sacramento, California. He told me about it, and it suggested possibilities. Rice at the same time had thought of a story of a Canadian who "struck ile," became a millionaire, created a town, and was there ruined, town and all, by the drying up of the supply. He also found the "fighting editor." The twins were a reminiscence, not an invention, of my own. The rest, as any novelist will understand, was simply the construction of a novel with these materials as its basis.'

Amiable sentimentalists is a fair term to apply to Besant and Rice as novelists. Greatly influenced by Dickens, they were disposed to the undue exercise of poetic justice; while mercilessly exposing vice, they were always careful to reward virtue; and many of their characters might have stepped out of the master's books. But they lacked many of the merits of Dickens, and their works are akin to his only in the matters of improbable plots and exaggerated characters.

'Ready-Money' Mortiboy, of the county bank that bears his name, is a miser, the son and heir of a race of misers, with all the attributes that are invariably attributed to such characters on the stage—the pouring back into the bottle of heel-taps, the putting out of candles, and such devices. His son, Dick, whom he had discarded years ago, comes back to him, apparently prosperous. As a matter of fact, he has only five hundred pounds in the world, and has returned with the idea of robbing his father by inducing him to provide a large sum of money to

work a non-existent Mexican silver-mine. The old man is incredulous, but impressed by the 'samples' (purchased in London): a pair of leggings taken from an Indian in Nicaragua, an ivory-handled dagger from the King of Dahomey for killing a gorilla when the dusky potentate was in danger of his life, and a (genuine) nugget of Mexican silver. But neither for this nor any other purpose will the old man, though he doats on his son, part with any sum of money. The latter is desperate, but at the very moment when he is about to let into the house his confederate Lafleur to commit an actual robbery, 'Ready-Money,' who wishes to keep Dick in England, makes over to him all his property by deed of gift. This seems such a glaring inconsistency that the reader is staggered; but it is nothing to what ensues. Dick is not impressed by his father's generosity.

'He treated me like a dog. He gave me the wages of a porter. He starved me and bullied me. He turned me into the streets with a ten-pound note. When I come home and pretend that I am rich, he fawns upon me and licks my hand. "Honour your father." Now, I ask an enlightened General Board of Worldly Affairs—if there is such a thing—how the devil I can be expected to honour Mr. Mortiboy, senior? Ready-Money Mortiboy, is he? Good! He shall have ready money for the future, and not too much of it. What he gave me I will give him. I've been a forger, have I? I've been a gambler and an adventurer—I've lived by tricks and cunning for twelve years, have I? I've done the fighting for Lafleur, and the lying for both of us, have I? I've been Roaring Dick, with my life in my hands and my pistol in

my pocket, sometimes with a fistful of money, sometimes without a dollar, have I? And whose fault? And now I'm master of everything. My affectionate father, your affection comes too late. I am what you made me—an unnatural son.'

The very night that the deed of gift is signed, he possesses himself forcibly of hidden treasure that the old man had intended to keep for himself. 'Ready-Money' awakes to find Dick rifling his hoard, and the shock is so great that he has a paralytic stroke from which he never recovers. And now comes the miracle. There are many cases when prosperity improves a man, but surely never before or since has there been a change so immediate and so wonderful. Dick, that great, big, bouncing blackguard, unscrupulous, a liar whenever advisable for his interests, many times a forger, more than once a thief, becomes suddenly a good man. He dissolves his partnership with Lafleur, immediately raises the salary of all the clerks in the bank, reduces the rents of his tenants, holds out a good-natured hand to all the world, adopts a child whom he finds in a baby-farm; and, later, even distributes partnerships in the bank. Obviously Dick is now too good to live, so he is shot by Lafleur—the best character in the book, consistent at least in his badness, even to cheating at cards when playing *à deux* with his partner, and full of as great a love for a gambling system as ever poet had for his verse.

One part of the story takes place in a county

town, where live the Mortiboys, the Mellishipps, and the Heathcotes; the other, centreing around Frank Melliship, in London. Melliship, the rival banker, was ruined by 'Ready-Money,' who would not come to his aid unless the former came to him cap in hand, and rather than do this Melliship died by his own hand.

'I will have nothing said about my father from you,' Frank told old Mortiboy. 'You were always his enemy. You took a pleasure in going up and down the town saying spiteful things of him. You envied him, Mr. Mortiboy. When he was richest you had treble his wealth; and, though you care more for money than for any other mortal thing, you envied him. You saw how people loved and respected him, and you looked in vain round Market Basing to find a soul that either loved or respected you. Do not dare to speak, sir, of a dead man whom you might have saved. Yes, Mr. Mortiboy, there is a letter lying on the study table now—an unfinished letter—telling me that you might have saved him. Do not dare, sir, to speak of the man whose death you have compassed.'

After the catastrophe Frank came to London to seek his fortune, and this gave the authors an opportunity to present an interesting view of the shady side of life in the metropolis—disreputable picture-dealers employed in 'faking' old masters, billiard-sharpers, rehearsals and performances at the North London Palace of Amusements, bogus agencies, baby-farms, and a third-rate boarding-house at Islington. The descriptions are accurate enough, and it is this part of the book that is most worthy of praise.

Particularly irritating is the preface to the most successful of the Besant-Rice stories, *The Golden Butterfly*, wherein it is stated that there was once a Golden Butterfly—actually seen by an English traveller in a mining city near Sacramento; that the striking of oil in the manner described by Gilead P. Beck was accomplished by a man named Shaw, who—like Beck—embarked in speculation, lost his money, and died in poverty; and that Beck's experiences as an editor are taken, with a little dressing, from the experiences of a living journalist. The dressing also seems to have been taken from the writings of a living author, who does not hide his identity under the pseudonym of 'Mark Twain.' Why this trouble is taken to show that the facts are true is inconceivable. What does it matter whether these things are true, since fiction is the art of lying artistically? A novel is good or bad according to whether the story and the characters are presented well or ill, not according to whether they are real or due to the author's imagination. Conceive an edition of *Robinson Crusoe*, with annotations by Defoe showing which incidents were the actual experiences of Selkirk or another, and which were due to his genius!

It is a little difficult to decide which is the principal theme of the story—whether it is the romance of Gilead P. Beck, or the comedy of Phillis Fleming, or the tragedy of Gabriel Cassilis. Beck

promises well at the start, but long before the end becomes a bore. His journalistic experiences, though amusing enough, are a digression; as is also the somewhat lengthy exposure of Captain Hamilton Ruggles, the card-sharper. Another and more serious interference with the story is the elaborate dinner given by Beck to do honour to the great literary men of the day, when Jack Dunquerque brings some of his fellow-clubmen 'made up' as Carlyle, Tennyson, Ruskin, Swinburne, Darwin, Huxley, and other notabilities; and Beck has ordered some three hundred books, the work of the famous men who are to be his guests, so that he may be able to talk with them on their own subjects. The only excuse for this burlesque would be the fun of it, and that is sadly lacking. It is low comedy, at best, and would be more in place in one of Douglas Jerrold's stories.

Beck has good impulses, and comes to regard himself as the trustee of his wealth. As he is an uneducated man, it is conceivable that he would be 'had' by Burls, the manufacturer of 'old masters'; but how could he, as a business man, entrust all his money to Cassilis the speculator to invest in Eldorado mines and other ventures of a similar nature? It is true he is not alone in his folly, for the steady Colquhoun and monosyllabic Ladds, of Ladds' Patent Anti-Dyspeptic Cocoa, calmly give the same man powers of attorney to treat their fortunes as he

pleases. It is according them nothing more than justice to make them penniless in the end. The other characters have little to recommend them. However, Phillis Fleming, unsophisticated, unconventional, the natural product of Abraham Dyson's new system of female education, is a delightful creature; while Dyson, who died unfortunately before he could put the Coping-Stone to his work, was certainly an original, and some of his maxims are worthy of preservation.

'Women brought up with women are hindered in their perfect development. Let the girls be separated from the society of their sex, and be educated mostly among men. In this way the receptivity of the female mind may be turned to best account in the acquirement of robust masculine ideas. Every girl may become a mother; let her therefore sit among men and listen.'

'The difficulty of abolishing class distinctions is one of the most lamentable facts in human history.'

'Reading breeds a restless curiosity, and engenders an irreverent spirit of carping criticism. Any jackanapes who can read thinks himself qualified to judge of the affairs of the nation.'

Lastly must be mentioned, because they attracted much attention when the book was published, the twin-brothers, Cornelius, the poet, with his epic in twenty-four cantos, 'The Upheaving of Ælfred'; and Humphrey, the artist with his great group, 'The Birth of the Renaissance,' who talk so much of their work, never do a stroke, and awake at the

age of fifty, when a chance commission comes their way, to find that the day has passed for them, and that their pen and pencil have lost their cunning. They are treated in a spirit of caricature, but, after making allowance for burlesque, they are real flesh and blood—lazy, sensuous, self-deluding.

As successful as the two preceding stories was *The Chaplain of the Fleet*, a story of the famous gaol in George the Third's reign, containing much that is interesting concerning the London of that period; and scarcely less popular at the time was the book that Besant thought was the best he and Rice produced, *By Celia's Arbour*, in which the scenes are laid in England and the Crimea. In later days Besant returned to this vein, and he wrote some half a dozen novels treating of different aspects of life in the eighteenth century: *Dorothy Forster*, the author's favourite; *For Faith and Freedom*, *The World Went Very Well Then*, *St. Katherine's by the Tower*, *The Orange Girl*, *No Other Way*, and *The Lady of Lynn*. All these books are readable, though not one can be ranked among the masterpieces of historical romance; and, for the most part, they are good according to how much of the action takes place in London, for there Besant, who aspired to be a twentieth-century Stow, was on firm ground. Indeed, his pictures of Georgian London have not been excelled.

Of the eighteen stories which Besant wrote in

the eighteen years following Rice's death in 1882, the majority call for no comment. Most of them were popular successes, not one was distinguished by any considerable literary merit. They lack the characterisation, the lightness, above all, they lack the humour, of the books written in collaboration. One critic has it, that this does not show that these features were wholly or mainly Rice's contribution, but that Besant grew older. The answer to this is that at Rice's death Besant was forty-six, an age when most authors compose their best works. *Tom Jones* and *Humphrey Clinker* were written when Fielding and Smollett were respectively forty-two and fifty; Sterne was forty-six when the first volume of *Tristram Shandy* appeared; Dickens was forty-seven when he published *A Tale of Two Cities*, and Reade a year younger when *The Cloister and the Hearth* was issued. Probably the defects in Besant's books were caused by the fact that, when unrestrained by Rice, he took himself too seriously. His themes were more ambitious; he became more didactic; and, as in *Herr Paulus* and *Armorel of Lyonesse*, and, in a sense, *The Fourth Generation*, he wrote with a purpose.

In spite of this change for the worse, however, he won his great success with books written solely by himself. With his stories or studies of life in the East End of London—*All Sorts and Conditions of Men, The Children of Gibeon*, in which is portrayed

the miserable life of the girls who do rough sewing in their own lodgings; *The Alabaster Box*, a tale of a settlement; and *The Rebel Queen*—he happened to strike the mood of the moment, for in the early 'eighties people's minds were much occupied by the problem of the slums. From the beginning it is obvious that the condition of the poor occupied Besant's thoughts. So early as 1872 in *Ready-Money Mortiboy* he puts into the mouth of a policeman speaking to Dick:

'If you can afford to spend the money—it is not much to rich people—take more than one [poor boy]. They 're growing up here by hundreds. Take as many as you can afford, and put 'em to school. It 'll cost money, because school ain't everything. Don't give to missionary societies and rubbish. . . . None of your institutions, and refuges, and penitentiaries, and reformatories, and foolishness, sir. You go in for a society where the people are going to look after the children themselves, and not send them out into the world with a ticket all the rest of their lives. Who 's going to get over being a reformatory boy? I haven't got patience with it. What I says to rich people is—don't talk about doing good, and don't belong to societies, but come down here. I 'll talk to 'em; and pick out a boy or a girl, of half-a-dozen boys and girls, and have 'em taught, and washed, and kept respectable, and it 'll be the best ticket to get into heaven that they 'll find anywhere.'

He returns to the theme in *The Golden Butterfly*, when he suggests that a man with unlimited credit should use his means to support a regiment of ragged

boys and girls, and to the improvement of the conditions of woman's labour.

With *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* Besant plunged headlong into the realms of Utopian extravaganza. He takes a young millionairess—Angela Marsden Messenger, the proprietress of the great brewery of Messenger, Marsden and Co.—who goes to live among the poor, where, in her efforts to do good, to the great disgust of her Girton fellow-student, she violates every canon of the science of political economy. Concealing her identity she starts a co-operative association of dressmakers, which she assists in many ways. Indeed, she becomes the Lady Bountiful of the neighbourhood. She lives at Mrs. Bormalack's—which resembles Mrs. Skimp's establishment (in *Ready-Money Mortiboy*) in its collection of strange inmates—and there she finds opportunity for indiscriminate charity. She publishes the worthless book of Daniel Fagg; lends her west-end mansion to the Davenports, claimants to a peerage; and finds employment in the searching of registers for an out-of-work professor of conjuring. There, too, she meets Harry Goslett, the son of working folk, who has been adopted, for amusement's sake, by Lord Jocelyn Le Breton; and, being told the secret of his paternity at the age of three-and-twenty, decides to rejoin his kindred. Harry is a wonderful young man, for, in a very few days, he discovers what is lacking in East End life.

'What we want here, as it seems to me, is a little more of the pleasures and graces of life,' he tells Angela. 'To begin with, we are not poor and in misery, but for the most part fairly well off. We have great works here—half a dozen breweries, though none so big as Messenger's; chemical works, sugar refineries, though these are a little depressed at present, I believe; here are all the docks; then we have silk-weavers, rope-makers, sail-makers, match-makers, cigar-makers; we build ships; we tackle jute, though what jute is, and what we do with it, I know not; we cut corks; we make soap, and we make fireworks; we build boats. When all our works are in full blast, we make quantities of money. See us on Sundays, we are not a bad-looking lot; healthy, well-dressed, and tolerably rosy. But we have no pleasures.'

Goslett explores Stepney, Mile End, and Whitechapel, and sums up these neighbourhoods as the Great Joyless City. In his eyes, the great tragedy is, that the people do not know how to *play*. 'It is not until a certain standard of civilisation is reached that people do laugh at things.' He tells the ignorant, fanatical socialists of the Advanced Club that the people must work for their own aims since no government without their active co-operation can assist them; and that, while the people have the power, it is useless to them if they do not, before using it, find out what they want. He sketches them a programme, good lodgings, good food, unadulterated drink, good and sensible education, holidays and pleasures, and justice for women-workers.

From this, playing at pretending to be rich, Harry evolves a scheme of a Palace of Delight, which shall

contain schools, reading-rooms, libraries, clubs, music-room, theatre, skating-rink, lecture-hall, and a school for music, dancing, and acting, for the people must do everything for themselves, and provide their own musicians and actors. His plan does not fall upon deaf ears, for the heiress listens, approves, and builds such a palace. 'We can at least make them discontented,' she says, 'and discontent must come before reform.' This was the creed that Besant was never tired of preaching. 'Never be satisfied *till you've got all you want*,' Dick Mortiboy tells little Bill. 'Rich people teach the poor to be humble and contented. That's because they want to keep what they've got. If you see a man humble, *kick him till he's proud*. And if you see a man contented, have him locked up in a lunatic asylum.' 'If the Catechism teaches boys to be contented,' said Dick on another occasion, 'then the Catechism is a most immoral book.'

The book closes with a joyful chord.

'The Palace of Delight is in working order now, and Stepney is already transformed. A new period began on the opening night for all who were present. For the first time they understood that life may be happy: for the first time they resolved that they would find out for themselves the secret of happiness. The angel with the flaming sword has at last stepped from the gates of the earthly Paradise, and we may now enter therein and taste, unreproved, of all the fruits except the apple of the Tree of Life—which has, indeed, been removed, long since, to another Place.'

It is to be doubted whether the People's Palace, which was a direct result of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, has achieved so much as the fictitious Palace of Delight, but it has certainly done a great deal to justify its existence.

The direct appeal of this book to those inclined to philanthropy arises from the man's tender heart and love of justice; but virtue in the author must not blind the critic to faults in the work. The style of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* is undistinguished, and there is a marked tendency to indulge in trite observations and a wealth of unnecessary detail; the atmosphere is artificial; the characters are not men and women but types—Angela, the power and will to do good; Harry, the knowledge how to do it; and so on; and the purpose is always so much in evidence that the illusion essential to an artistic work is not produced. Still, the picture of the joyless life of the East-End workers is, even if not convincing in its realism, at least most effective. And certainly the author can claim that the book served its purpose.

WILLIAM BLACK

It must have required no little courage for a young man to enter the literary arena as a novelist in the year 1864, for at that date many great writers of fiction held the field against all comers. It is true Thackeray was dead, but Dickens was in his prime, and Bulwer-Lytton, Disraeli, Charles Lever, George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, Charles and Henry Kingsley, Whyte-Melville, Charles Reade, and Anthony Trollope, as well as George Meredith: men who between them shared the leadership of all the various schools of fiction, social, historical, mystical, adventure, political, rollicking, purposeful, sporting. Obviously, therefore, before a new author could find a footing he must contend against the giants. That Black did this, argues much merit in his work; but his victory was only partial, for, though he ranked among the most popular writers during many years of his life, he was never the peer of his famous contemporaries.

Black, then, began, in 1864, his career as a novelist with the publication of *James Merle: An Autobiography*, the story of a son of a puritan Scotch family who, to the horror of his relatives, fell in love with

Photo. Elliott & Fry.

WILLIAM BLACK.

the daughter of the village inn-keeper. This book was so little successful, and indeed the author had apparently so poor an opinion of its merits, that he never reprinted it, even in those days when any volume bearing the imprint of his name sold like wildfire. Likewise, little attention was attracted by its successor *Love or Marriage*, in which Black embodied his experiences of the Prusso-Austrian war, gained when he was the special war-correspondent of *The Morning Star*; and it may be said that he became known to the public only with the appearance in 1870 of *In Silk Attire*, in which, perhaps, an acute observer might have detected the germs of his later books, for it contains one of his charming women and some fine passages descriptive of scenery in the Black Forest. More popular was *Kilmeny*, a study of artistic life, in London, Brighton, and Buckinghamshire, with the inevitable accompaniment of descriptions, this time, of rural scenery; but his next book, *The Monarch of Mincing Lane*, based upon the knowledge of city life obtained when a clerk in a great firm of India and China merchants, showed a great falling-off, due, no doubt, to the choice of an uncongenial subject.

It was not until seven years after the issue of his first book that Black tasted the sweets of a great success with *A Daughter of Heth*, which was published anonymously, as he wished to get an unprejudiced verdict from *The Saturday Review*, on the staff of

which, because of previous adverse criticism, he assumed, rightly or wrongly, he had an enemy. *A Daughter of Heth* carried with it both press and public, and from this time forth he ranked with the most popular of his contemporaries. The story of this successful book is simplicity itself—the introduction of a *débonnaire* young French girl into the family of a Scotch presbyterian minister. At first Coquette, the heroine, has much prejudice to contend against in her new home, for, above all, she is a Roman Catholic, and consequently detestable to many of the simple folk, though, for her part, she cannot understand why her religion is regarded with horror. 'We all look to one Father Who is kind to us,' she suggests with a puzzled air. The general factotum of the household, Andrew Bogue, gives his opinion of her coming to dwell at Airlie: 'It's a dispensation, Leezebeth; that's what it is—a dispensation—this hussy coming amang us wi' her French silks and her satins, and her deevlish license o' talking like a play-actor'; while 'Lisbeth openly regards her as 'a child of the devil.' In the end they all, save dour Andrew, fall under the spell of her personality; but from the first she finds a champion in the eldest son of the household, Tom Cassilis, better known as 'The Whaup,' a lovable, mischievous, teasing, chivalrous, handsome young man, with plenty of brains and plenty of courage. He it is who, to stop such wickedness, runs up the stairs three at a time when Coquette in all ignorance

plays on the Sabbath Day, 'O Normandie, ma Normandie!'

'She did not sing loudly, but he thought he had never heard such singing. He paused for a moment at the top of the stairs. He listened, and succumbed to the temptress. The peculiar penetrating *timbre* of the contralto voice pierced him and fixed him there, so that he forgot all about his well-meant interference. He listened breathlessly, and with a certain amount of awe, as if it had been vouchsafed to him to hear the chanting of angels. He remembered no more that it was sinful; and when the girl ceased, it seemed to him there was a terrible void in the silence, which was almost misery.'

Her music won them all. One day, just to see if she could master the pronunciation, she sang a verse of 'The Flowers of the Forest,' when 'Lisbeth entered. The girl rose, thinking that the woman had come to prefer yet another complaint, but it was not so.

'"Will ye sing that again, Miss, if it is no much trouble to ye?" she asked, with the most painful shamefacedness clouding her look. "Maybe ye 'll no ken that me and Andrew had a boy—a bit laddie that dee'd when he was but seven years auld—and—and—he used to sing 'The Flowers o' the Forest' afore a' the ither songs, and ye sing it that fine that if it didna make a body amaist like to greet——"'

'Lisbeth never finished the sentence, and she stood silent, with her eyes turned to the grey evening outside, while Coquette sang the rest of the song. From that day she gave the girl no further trouble.

Coquette's victory over that quaint character, Neil Lamont, the piper, was as complete. When she

played to him the Scotch air, 'Wha'll be king but Charlie,' which he had heard only played by boys on penny whistles, he became more and more excited, first beating time with his foot and slapping his thigh with his hand; then, with head erect and tears running down his withered cheeks, yet looking defiance at all and sundry, he sprang to his feet, marching up and down the room, waving his violin-bow as if it were a sword; and at last in shrill and quavering tones crying,

'Come ower sa heather! come a' tagether!
Come Ronald, an' Tonald, an' a' tagether!'

'*Aw, Dyeea,*' he exclaimed, when Coquette rose from the piano, 'I have never heard sa like o' sat not since sa day I will pe porn!' Like the born gentleman he was, Neil was anxious not to let Coquette know he had been present at Waterloo, lest being half a Frenchwoman she should feel the sting of that defeat; but some one told her, and she mentioned to him that she knew of it. Amusing enough was the conflict of his desire to spare her pain with his effort to hide his pride at the exploits of his old comrades.

'"Who wass it tellt you of Waterloo?" said he, in great indignation. "I never heard sa like! It wass a shame—and I would not take a hundred pounds and forget mysel' like sat. And you will be blaming us Hielanders for what we did—and we did a good teal there—but there wass others too. There wass English there too. And the French—say fought well, as every one o' us will tell ye; and I wouldna sink too

much o 't; for maype it isna true sat Napoleon died on sa island. Didna he come pack pefore?"'

There is a love episode, of course; but the charm of the book is in Coquette, innocent, simple, tender, 'an elf, a fay, with her dark eyes and witching ways,' who is beautifully, almost reverently portrayed by her creator.

Not less attractive is 'Madcap' Violet, a wilful, affectionate, lovable girl, rather pert, untamed, intrepid, with an almost pagan delight in the present, whose life is traced from childhood to her tragic end. 'Tall, straight and lithe as a willow-wand, proud-lipped, frank, happy, and courageous of face, with all the light of youth and strength showing in her eyes,' she, too, wins all hearts. But far better conceived than she is James Drummond, that delightful idler with his quaint monologues and reflections which never have anything to do with the matter in hand, and the habit, to support his arguments, of continually lugging in imaginary men of straw and making them toss about their impossible arms. He is a great character and a creature so lovable and tender and true that it is no wonder that Violet prefers him to the younger George Miller. Their love-affair is spoilt by a good-natured muddler, and the end is tragic. Violet runs away, and is discovered only shortly before her lover's death:

'And now Drummond looked at the door; for he knew who would open it next. He was weak and ill, perhaps that was

why the wasted frame trembled so. Then the door was gently opened; and Violet, tall, pale, her eyes streaming with tears, appeared. For an instant she stood motionless, trying to collect herself before approaching the invalid; but the first glimpse she got of the shattered wreck lying before her caused her to utter a quick, sharp cry of agony, and she threw herself on her knees beside him, and wound her arms round him, for the first time, as she cried in the bitterness of her heart—

'"My darling, my darling, it is not too late?"

'"No, not too late," he answered, solemnly. "Whether it be in this world, or in the greater world that lies ahead. . . . Violet, give me your hand."

'She raised herself for a moment, and their eyes were fixed on each other—his clear, and calm, and earnest; hers troubled, and dark, and full of an agonised tenderness. He held out his right hand to her; and she placed her right hand in his; and there was no need of any further words between these two, then or thereafter, during the time that was left to them to be together.'

It is commonly held that either *A Daughter of Heth* or *Madcap Violet* is Black's masterpiece; but surely those who make this pronouncement have not read *Macleod of Dare*, for in this study of the artistic temperament, where the action takes place alternately in London and at Castle Dare on the bleak coast of Mull, there is a breadth not to be met with in any other of this novelist's works. Also, the story is closer knit and better constructed than in most of his books. Here Black was in his element, for he was able to show his abiding love for the wild scenery of Northern Scotland as well as for Highland men and women. How real is Lady Macleod, and, though

so dimly outlined, the tender Janet, who recalls her exquisite namesake in the *Harry Richmond* of another and a greater novelist! Sir Keith Macleod of Dare, the last of a proud race, goes to London for a season, and there, where, by virtue of his grand air and a fine simplicity, he is like a giant among the pigmies of the lion-hunting coteries, he meets Gertrude White, the actress. They fall in love, but Gertrude soon discovers she could not endure to live permanently at Castle Dare, so far away from all that is precious to her. Yet she does not immediately undeceive Sir Keith, perhaps she cares for him in her way and is loth to lose him; and indeed she keeps him by her, even when she is about to be married to another, of which impending event he learns by chance. Now, he is not a man lightly to be played with, for in his veins runs the turbulent blood of a dare-devil race. First, he pleads with her tenderly, and there is nothing more poetic in the book than his appeal, beginning, 'Are you frightened, sweetheart.' Most women would have been touched by his cry of a breaking heart; but not Gertrude, who is only frightened, for she is a poor thing really, and unable to rise to his heights, utterly unworthy of him. Then there recurs to his mind the suggestion of Hamish, the loyal henchman, that he shall carry her off in his yacht as, similarly circumstanced, his forebears would have done, at first laughingly to be put aside, in the end to be carried out. A simple

stratagem brings Gertrude on board the yacht, and there nothing she can say or do will move him, for he is imbued with the idea that *au fond* she loves him still and that he must save her from herself. Her indignation avails her naught, nor, later, are her wiles more successful; then at last she tells him she hates him and would never marry him. Her tones carry conviction, and he is face to face with the problem of what is best to do. He might, of course, put her ashore, which would be equivalent to letting her go, for certainly he could not then marry her against her will, since the moment she puts foot on land she would find protection; but there comes to him a temptation, terrible, yet magnificent, and well worthy of the wild records of his race. He sends his men ashore, and then in the storm puts the yacht about: since she will not live with him, they will die together. The ensuing scene is depicted in a passage of great beauty, than which Black never wrote anything finer.

'Another blue-white fleet of flame quivered all around them, just as this black figure (Hamish) was descending into the gig; and then the fierce hell of sounds broke loose once more. Land and sky together seemed to shudder at the wild uproar; and far away the sounds went thundering through the hollow night. How could one hear if there was any sobbing in that departing boat—or any last cry of farewell? It was Ulva calling now; and Fladda answering from over the black water; and the Dutchman is surely awake at last! There came a stirring of wind—from the east, and the sea

began to moan. Surely the poor fugitives must have reached the shore now? And then there was a new and strange noise in the distance; in the awful silence between the peals of thunder it could be heard; it came nearer and nearer—a low, murmuring noise, but full of a secret life and thrill—it came along like the tread of a thousand armies—and then the gale struck its first blow! The yacht reeled under the stroke; then her bows staggered up again like a dog that has been felled; and after one or two convulsive plunges she clung hard at the strained cables. And now the gale was growing in fury, and the sea rising. Blinding showers of rain swept over, hissing and roaring; the blue-white tongues of flame were shooting this way and that across the startled heavens; and there was a more awful thunder even than the roar of the Atlantic booming into the great sea-caves. In the abysmal darkness the spectral arms of the ocean rose white in their angry clamour; and then another blue gleam would lay bare the great heaving and writhing bosom of the deep. What devil's dance is this? Surely it cannot be Ulva—Ulva the green-shored—Ulva that the sailors in their love of her call softly *Ool-a-va*—that is laughing aloud with wild laughter on this fearful night? And Colonsay, and Lunga, and Fladda—they were beautiful and quiet in the still summer-time; but now they have gone mad; and they are flinging back the plunging sea in white masses of foam; and they are shrieking in their fierce joy of the strife. And Staffa—Staffa is far away and alone; she is trembling to her core; how long will the shuddering caves withstand the mighty hammer of the Atlantic surge? And then again the sudden wild gleam startles the night—and one sees, with an appalling vividness, the driven white waves and the black islands—and then again a thousand echoes go booming along the iron-bound coast. What can be heard in the roar of the hurricane, and the hissing of rain, and the thundering whirl of the waves on the rocks? surely not the one glad last cry: SWEETHEART! YOUR HEALTH! YOUR HEALTH IN THE COAL-BLACK WINE!'

It is worthy of remark that these three novels upon which Black's reputation must rest ultimately, have each the 'bad' ending. *A Daughter of Heth* is brought to a close with the death of Coquette; the curtain of *Madcap Violet* falls on the death of Drummond and the madness of the heroine; and *Macleod of Dare* concludes with the drowning of the principal characters. Black fought hard against these tragedies, especially in the case of *Madcap Violet*, where he intended to have the orthodox wedding-bells; 'but the story itself has been drifting towards a tragic ending,' he admitted helplessly, 'and I shall run the risk of outraging all sorts of tender susceptibilities if I let it go on to that.' Letters from readers of all classes poured in upon the perplexed author, and even Mr. Swinburne wrote, 'I will go down on my knees to you to spare that sweet Violet'; but the unhappy conclusion was inevitable, and, against the author's will, it went that way.

'When I began the writing of novels, more years ago now than I care to count, I set out with no more definite intention than that of making my men and women as like as I could to the men and women I had seen or known,' Black wrote in his defence. 'As I never had had the pleasure of the acquaintance of a murderer, a forger, or a bigamist—and as it seemed to me that murderers, forgers, and bigamists formed, after all, but a small proportion of the population of this country—I thought it would be at least safer to leave these persons out altogether. But, on the other hand, it never

occurred to me that I should be expected to represent the world as consisting exclusively of sugar-plums and orange blossoms; that the business of the novelist was to be limited to the patching up of marriages; and that my dearest friends would execrate me for admitting that even good people may occasionally be the victims of apparently quite unnecessary and unrequited suffering.'

For a lengthy period he had written stories with happy ending, and upon this he commented amusingly:

'It seems hard that my eight orange-blossom novels should be wholly forgotten, or should survive only as a soporific. It seems strange that the people who protest against tragedy should remember only the three tragic ones.'

Then he continued whimsically:

'But as regards my future work? Just now, for example, I am engaged in the composition of a story the characters in which have really nothing awful or tragic about them. They and I get on very well together; we have had some five excursions together; I should like to part on good terms with them. But I am drawn to ask whether, in order to ensure that they shall remain for at least one year in the memory of my readers, I may not, after all, have to set to work at the end of the third volume and *Niebelungen* them into nothing.'

Black's powers of character-drawing were in no wise remarkable, and it would probably puzzle even a diligent reader of his many books to recall, a few months after the perusal, a dozen that are in any way distinguished. Perhaps the best are Gertrude White and Sir Keith Macleod and Coquette, and the most popular (in addition to those) Violet—who is little more than

a charming lay figure; and, from *The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton*, Bell and Queen Tita. The great merit of his books, however, is to be found not in his characters, nor in his stories, which are rarely strong enough to sustain the interest, but in his descriptive passages. Indeed, his books are overladen with descriptions of scenery, often introduced unnecessarily; and in *The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton*, founded upon a drive from London to Edinburgh taken by the author in company with Mr. R. S. Williams, the discoverer of Charlotte Brontë, this is done to so great an extent that it is difficult at times to remember that after all it is a novel and not a guide-book. This book, which first revealed Black's descriptive powers in their maturity, extorted the praise of Ruskin, and henceforth the public regarded itself as cheated if there were not many such pen-pictures, with the natural result that there is depicted American scenery in *Green Pastures and Piccadilly*, South of Ireland scenery in *Shandon Bells* (which contains a portrait of the author's dead friend, William Barry, as hero, in the midst of literary London), and Highland and Hebridean scenery in *A Princess of Thule*, *White Wings*, *In Far Lochaber*, and *Wild Eelin*—for which last books Rudyard Kipling dubbed him 'The Admiral of the North, from Solway Firth to Skye.' His descriptions of sunset and sunrise, of landscape and sea-scape in calm and stormy weather, are picturesque and worthy of high praise. 'With regard to myself,' he

said, speaking of those who wished to know something of his methods:

'I would not have them imagine that I either practise or recommend a description of scenery as scenery—that is, trying to do in literature what the landscape painter does in art. What I try to do is to get at the very things the painter cannot reach at all—the singing of birds, the scent of hedges, the blowing of the wind, a changing of light, anything, indeed, that will give a sense of space and atmosphere and colour and light as surrounding my characters. . . . I don't care much for orthodox scenery. What I care for are effects of light and colour (which you get more beautifully in the West Highlands than in any other place I know), and I would sooner see a rose-red sunrise along a bit of icicled road than all the Swiss landscapes I ever beheld.'

Description being his forte, and characterisation and imagination his weakness, it is obvious he was not equipped to write works that will stand the test of time. He had some humour and a great tenderness. He was a charming writer, but, as a rule, perhaps the least little bit wearisome; yet readable always, though rarely engrossing. Still, he entertained his generation, and *Macleod of Dare* is a splendid book.

Printed by T. and A. Constable, Printers to His Majesty
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